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The Tragedy of Hamlet

by

William Shakespeare

with notes, extracts from the Old "Historie of Hamblet" and selected criticism on the play by John Hunter

London : Spottiswoode, 1874

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PREFACE.

The legend of Amleth, or Hamlet, is first met with in the Third and Fourth Books of the 'History of Denmark,' written in Latin by Saxo Grammaticus, a native of Elsinore, about the end of the twelfth century, but not printed till 1514. About fifty years after the publication of Saxo's History, Belleforest, in a French collection of Stories, called 'Histoires Tragiques,' introduced that of Amleth, in a form pretty nearly corresponding to the Danish historian's account, leaving out a few gross and absurd details, and considerably amplifying some of the sentimental portions; but presenting, like the original, a very poor treasury of incident and thought for the purposes of dramatic adaptation. From the 'Histoires Tragiques,' an English translation, called the 'Historie of Hamblet,' was made before the close of the sixteenth century, but the only perfect copy of it known to exist is a black-letter quarto, bearing the date of 1608, and now in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge. A modern reprint of it (1841) will be found in J. P. Collier's 'Shakspeare's Library.'

If this 'Historie' was the only source from which Shakspeare derived materials for the framework of his 'Hamlet,' all the excellence of that wonderful drama is his own. As Capel observes, 'None of the relater's expressions have got into the play, except when Hamlet kills the counsellor behind the arras: here, beating the hangings, he cries out, "A rat! a rat!"' But from some allusions by old writers, it seems tolerably certain that the story of Hamlet had been dramatised, with the introduction of a ghost scene, before Shakspeare had reached his 24th year; and therefore our poet may have taken the outline of his plot from a previous play, rather than from the Danish historian's legend, which makes no mention of a ghost. But, as Collier, in his edition of Shakspeare, says, 'How far that lost play might be an improvement upon the old translated *Historie* we have no means of deciding, nor to what extent Shakspeare availed himself of such improvement.'[1]

[1] The following extract from Sir Thomas Overbury's *Characters* deserves to be read by the student of Shakspeare's *Hamlet*. I cannot help thinking that it was seen in manuscript, if not in print, by our dramatist before the *Hamlet* was written :—

'*A Melancholy Man* is a strayer from the drove: one that nature made sociable, because she made him man, and a crazed disposition hath altered. Impleasing to all, as all to him, straggling thoughts are his content; they make him dream waking; there's his pleasure. His imagination is never idle, it keeps his mind in a continual motion, as the poise the clock; he winds up his thoughts often, and as often unwinds them; Penelope's web thrives faster. He'll seldom

The first production of Shakspeare's 'Hamlet,' in the original form (for he afterwards altered it), was certainly not later than 1602, and probably not later than 1589, when he was only twenty-five years of age. The earliest edition of it known is the small quarto of 1603, of which one copy is in the library of the Duke of Devonshire, and another, discovered in 1856, is deposited in the British Museum. In the year 1604, another edition came forth, under the title of 'The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke, By William Shakespeare. Newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie. At London, printed by I. R. for N. L. and are to be

be found without the shade of some grove, in whose bottom a river dwells. He carries a cloud in his face, never fair weather; his outside is framed to his inside, in that he keeps a *decorum*, both unseemly. Speak to him; he hears with his eyes, ears follow his mind, and that's not at leisure. He thinks business, but never does any; he is all contemplation, no action. He hews and fashions his thoughts, as if he meant them to some purpose, but they prove unprofitable as a piece of wrought timber to no use. His spirit and the sun are enemies; the sun bright and warm, his humour black and cold.'

That Shakspeare had read some of Overbury's *Characters* before the production of the *Hamlet*, may appear somewhat probable from a comparison of the following passages:—

'Do not believe his vows, for *they are brokers,*
Not of the dye which their investments show.'—*Hamlet*, i. 3.

'*He dyeth his means and his meaning into two colours;* he baits craft with humility, and his countenance is the picture of the present disposition. He allures, is not allured, by his affections, for *they are the brokers of his observation.*'—OVERBURY'S *Dissembler.*

sold at his shoppe vnder Saint Dunston's Church in Fleetstreet. 1604.' Only three copies of this second quarto are known, one of them belonging to the Duke of Devonshire. Exact reprints of the two 'Devonshire Hamlets,' were published, in one volume, in 1860.

It is very probable that the vilely-printed quarto of 1603 is a surreptitious version, by some ignorant copier or shorthand writer of Shakspeare's first draft of his noble tragedy of 'Hamlet.' And we can easily suppose that draft to have been one of the earliest of his dramatic compositions. The second quarto, as well as the first, was surreptitious; but both are of great value in enabling us to rectify many mistakes and to supply several omissions in the folio of 1623, the first edition of the collected plays of Shakspeare.

In the present edition of the 'Hamlet,' we have endeavoured, by carefully collating the early quartos with the first folio, to give the text in the best *warrantable* form; but in order to render the book suitable for schools and family reading, we have omitted one or two of the more grossly indelicate sentences, the expurgation being of very slight extent.

It will be observed that we have departed from the usual practice of substituting an apostrophe for the silent vowel in the verbal affix *-ed*. On this subject we concur with Professor Craik, who,

in the Prolegomena to his 'English of Shakspeare (p. 62), says, 'It is true that the cases in which the *-ed* makes a separate syllable are more numerous in Shakspeare than in the poetry of the present day; but the reader who cannot detect such a case on the instant is disqualified by some natural deficiency for the reading of verse. If any distinction were necessary, the better plan would be to represent the one form by *loved*, the other by *lov-ed*.'

With respect to the Notes, we hope they will not be thought more numerous than necessary. Sir Thomas Overbury says of one of his *Characters*, 'Where the gate stands open, he is ever seeking a stile, and where his learning ought to climb, he creeps through.' This description, unfortunately, is to a great extent applicable to many of Shakspeare's commentators. They often overload and mystify, and sometimes even pervert with comment, sentences or expressions of which the meaning is sufficiently obvious, while in too many instances they fail to mark the footsteps of the poet's less direct and obvious transitions, and leave unexplained what in the mind of the general reader is likely to be mistaken or very inadequately followed. But it is to be regretted that the injury done to our great dramatist by injudicious comment should have excited in not a few of his worshippers a prejudice against all attempts to

elucidate his meaning. It is true that referring to marginal comments during the perusal of a play must disturb the reader's enjoyment of it, even when the exposition is sound and the illustration pertinent. But it is also true that the kind of pleasure felt by many readers of Shakspeare is one into which they are beguiled by a magic tone that breathes in the very syllables of the mighty genius, and that is accompanied with too vague conceptions of the import of his language. Surely it were better, with respect to works of such immortal eminence in the world's literature as those of Shakspeare, that we should take some pains to ascertain their true sense and spirit, and thus qualify ourselves for a more intelligent and refined enjoyment of the uninterrupted perusal of them. In this edition of the 'Hamlet,' therefore, we have endeavoured to avoid all superfluous comment, and to do real service to those who desire to study the play in its language, forms of thought, allusions, &c., as well as in its delineations of character. Such notes and criticisms are introduced as may excite the popular mind to take an interest in understanding the scope and details of this noble drama, and at the same time enable senior candidates for the Oxford Middle-Class Examinations of 1865 to prepare themselves thoroughly in one of the subjects of their programme.

EXTRACTS

FROM THE OLD TRANSLATED

'HISTORIE OF HAMBLET.'

CHAPTER I.—You must understand that long time before the kingdom of Denmark received the faith of Jesus Christ, the common people were barbarous and uncivil, and their princes cruel. There was sometimes a good prince or king among them, who, being adorned with the most perfect gifts of nature, would addict himself to virtue, and use courtesy; but although the people had him in admiration, yet the envy of his neighbours was so great, that they never ceased until that virtuous man were despatched out of the world. King Roderick, as then reigning in Denmark, divided the kingdom into divers provinces, placing governors therein who bare the names of dukes, marquises, and earls, giving the government of Jutie (at this present called Ditmarse, lying upon the country of the Cimbrians, in the narrow part of land that showeth like a point or cape of ground upon the sea, which neathward bordereth upon the country of Norway) to two valiant and warlike lords—Horvendile[1] and Fengon.[2]

Now, the greatest honour that men of noble birth could at that time win and obtain, was exercising the art of piracy upon the seas, assailing their neighbours, &c.; wherein Horvendile obtained the highest place in his time, being the most renowned pirate that in those days scoured the seas and havens of the north parts, whose great fame so moved

[1] Comp. with Hamlet's father. [2] Comp. with Claudius.

the heart of Collere,[1] king of Norway, that he was much grieved to hear that Horvendile surmounted him in feats of arms, thereby obscuring the glory by him already obtained upon the seas. This valiant and hardy king, having challenged Horvendile to fight with him body to body, the combat was by him accepted, with conditions that he which should be vanquished should lose all the riches he had in his ship, &c. And, to conclude, Collere, although a valiant prince, was in the end vanquished and slain by Horvendile, who, having then overrun all the coast of Norway and the northern islands, returned home laden with much treasure, sending the most part thereof to his sovereign king Roderick, thereby to procure his good-liking. The king, allured by those presents, and esteeming himself happy to have so valiant a subject, sought by a great favour and courtesy to make him become bounden unto him perpetually, giving him Geruth[2] his daughter to his wife, of whom he knew Horvendile to be already much enamoured. Of this marriage proceeded Hamblet.

Fengon, fretting in his heart at the great honour won by his brother, and provoked by a foolish jealousy to see him honoured with royal alliance, and fearing thereby to be deposed from his part of the government, or rather desiring to be only governor,[3] thereby to obscure the memory of the victories of his brother Horvendile, determined to kill him; which he effected in such sort, that no man once so much as suspected him. Fengon, having secretly assembled certain men, Horvendile his brother being at a banquet with his friends, suddenly set upon him, where he slew him as traitorously, as cunningly he purged himself of so detestable a murder to his subjects; for that, before he committed parricide upon his brother, he had incestuously abused his wife. His sin found excuse among the common people, and of the nobility was esteemed for justice; for that, Geruth being as

[1] Comp. with old Fortinbras—'Thereto pricked on by a most emulate pride.' *Act* i. *sc.* 1.

[2] Comp. with Gertrude.

[3] Both Fengon and Horvendile are afterwards called kings, and Geruth is called queen.

courteous a princess as any, this adulterer and infamous murderer slandered his dead brother that he would have slain his wife, and that he, by chance finding himself upon the point ready to do it, in defence of the lady had slain him; which was the cause that Fengon, boldened and encouraged by such impunity, durst venture to couple himself in marriage with Geruth. The unfortunate and wicked woman, that had received the honour to be the wife of one of the valiantest and wisest princes in the north, imbased herself in such vile sort, as to falsify her faith unto him, and, what is worse, to marry him that had been the tyrannous murderer of her lawful husband, which made divers men think that she had been the causer of the murder.[1]

CHAPTER II.—Geruth having so much forgotten herself, Hamblet, perceiving himself to be in danger of his life, counterfeited the madman, with such craft and subtle practices, that he made show as if he had utterly lost his wits; and under that veil he covered his pretence, and defended his life from the treasons and practices of the tyrant his uncle. For every day he rent and tore his clothes, wallowing and lying in the dust and mire, his face all filthy and black, running through the streets like a man distraught, not speaking one word but such as seemed to proceed of madness and mere frenzy.

Hamblet, in this sort counterfeiting the madman, many times did divers actions of great and deep consideration; and often made such and so fit answers that a wise man would soon have judged from what spirit so fine an invention might proceed. For that standing by the fire, and sharpening sticks like poniards and pricks, one in smiling manner asked him wherefore he made those little staves so sharp at the points. 'I prepare,' said he, 'piercing darts and sharp arrows to revenge my father's death.' Fools esteemed those

[1] Whether *Shakspeare's Gertrude* was an accessory before the fact in the murder of her first husband, is still a controverted point. We have no hesitation in thinking she was not. In the quarto of 1603, she is made to say—

'But as I have a soul, I swear by heaven,
I never knew of this most horrid murder.'

his words as nothing; but men of quick spirits, and such as had a deeper reach, began to suspect somewhat, esteeming that under that kind of folly there lay hidden a great and rare subtlety, such as one day might be prejudicial to their prince, saying that under colour of such madness he shadowed a crafty policy, and by his devised simplicity concealed a sharp and pregnant spirit; for which cause they counselled the king to try and know if possible how to discover the intent and meaning of the young prince; and they could find no better nor more fit invention to entrap him than to set some fair and beautiful woman[1] in a secret place, that, with flattering speeches, and all the craftiest means she could use, should purposely seek to allure his mind. And surely the poor prince at this assault had been in great danger, if a gentleman,[2] that in Horvendile's time had been nourished with him, had not shown himself more affectioned to the bringing up he had received with Hamblet than desirous to please the tyrant. This gentleman more desired to give the prince instruction what he should do, than to entrap him. By the lady he was likewise informed of the treason, as being one that from her infancy loved and favoured him, and would have been exceeding sorrowful for his misfortune, so that as then Fengon's practice took no effect.

CHAPTER III.—Among the friends of Fengon there was one[3] that among all the rest doubted of Hamblet's practices in counterfeiting the madman; who, for that cause, said that it was impossible that so crafty a gallant as Hamblet should be discovered with so common and unskilful practices, and that to find out his politic pretence, it were necessary to invent some subtle and crafty means more attractive, whereby the gallant might not have the leisure to use his accustomed dissimulation; which to effect, he said, he knew a fit way, and a most convenient mean to effect the king's desire, and thereby to entrap Hamblet in his subtleties, and cause him of his own accord to fall into the net prepared for him, and

[1] Comp. with Ophelia. [2] Comp. with Horatio.
[3] Comp. with Polonius.

thereby evidently show his secret meaning. His device was thus: that King Fengon should make as though he were to go some long voyage, and that in the meantime Hamblet should be shut up alone in a chamber with his mother, wherein some other should secretly be hidden behind the hangings, unknown either to him or his mother, there to stand and hear their speeches, and the complots by them to be taken concerning the accomplishment of the dissembling fool's pretence, assuring the king that, if there were any point of wisdom and perfect sense in the gallant's spirit, without all doubt he would easily discover it to his mother, as being devoid of all fear that she would utter or make known his secret intent; and withal offered himself to be the man that should stand to hearken and bear witness of Hamblet's speeches with his mother. This invention pleased the king exceeding well. The counsellor entered secretly into the queen's chamber, and there hid himself behind the arras, not long before the queen and Hamblet came thither; who being crafty and politic, as soon as he was within the chamber, doubting some treason, and fearing, if he should speak severely and wisely to his mother touching his secret practices, he should be understood, and by that means intercepted, used his ordinary manner of dissimulation, and began to crow like a cock, beating with his arms upon the hangings of the chamber, whereby, feeling something stirring under them, he cried, 'A rat, a rat!' and presently drawing his sword, thrust it into the hangings, which done, he pulled the counsellor, half dead, out by the heels, made an end of killing him, and, being slain, cut his body in pieces, which he caused to be boiled, and then cast into an open vault, that so it might serve for food to the hogs. By which means having discovered the ambush, and given the inventor thereof his just reward, he came again to his mother, who in the meantime wept and tormented herself, to see all her hopes frustrated; for that, what fault soever she had committed, yet was she sore grieved to see her only child made a mere mockery, every man reproaching her with his folly. Hamblet having once again searched every corner of the chamber,

distrusting his mother as well as the rest, and perceiving himself to be alone, began in sober and discreet manner to speak unto her, saying:—

'What treason is this, O most infamous woman of all that ever prostituted themselves to the will of an abominable whoremonger; who, under the veil of a dissembling creature, covereth the most wicked and detestable crime that man could ever imagine or was committed? How may I be assured to trust you, that like a vile wanton adulteress, altogether impudent and given over to her pleasure, runs spreading forth her arms joyfully to embrace the traitorous villainous tyrant that murdered my father, and most incestuously receivest the villain into the lawful bed of your loyal spouse? Is this the part of a queen, and daughter to a king—to live like a brute beast, to follow the pleasure of an abominable king, that hath murdered a far honester and better man than himself in massacring Horvendile, the honour and glory of all the Danes? I, for my part, will never account him for my kinsman, nor once know him for mine uncle, nor you, my dear mother, for not having respect to the blood that ought to have united us so straitly together, and who neither with your honour, nor without suspicion of consent to the death of your husband, could ever have agreed to have married with his cruel enemy. O Queen Geruth, it is licentiousness only that hath made you deface out of your mind the memory of the valour and virtues of the good king your husband and my father. It was an unbridled desire that guided the daughter of Roderick to embrace the tyrant Fengon, and not to remember Horvendile, unworthy of so strange entertainment, neither that he killed his brother traitorously, and that she being his father's wife betrayed him, although he so well favoured and loved her, that for her sake he utterly bereaved Norway of her riches and valiant soldiers to augment the treasures of Roderick, and made Geruth wife to the hardiest prince in Europe. It is not the part of a woman, much less of a princess, thus to leave her dear child to fortune in the bloody and murderous hands of a villain and traitor. Brute beasts do not so. Is not this as much as if you should

betray me, when you knowing the perverseness of the tyrant and his intents, full of deadly counsel as touching the race and image of his brother, have not once sought nor desired to find the means to save your child by sending him into Swethland, Norway, or England, rather than to leave him as a prey to your infamous adulterer? Be not offended, I pray you, madam, if, transported with grief, I speak so boldly unto you, and that I respect you less than duty requireth; for you, having forgotten me, and wholly rejected the memory of the deceased king my father, must not be abashed if I also surpass the bounds and limits of due consideration. Behold into what distress I am now fallen, and to what mischief my fortune and your own great lightness and want of wisdom have induced me, that I am constrained to play the madman to save my life, instead of using and practising arms, following adventures, and seeking all means to make myself known to be the true and undoubted heir of the valiant and virtuous King Horvendile. It was not without just occasion that my gestures, countenances, and words seem all to proceed from a madman. It is better for me to feign madness than to use my right senses as nature hath bestowed them upon me: the bright shining clearness whereof I am forced to hide under the shadow of dissimulation, as the sun doth his beams under some great cloud, when the weather in summer-time overcasteth. The face of a madman serveth to cover my gallant countenance, and the gestures of a fool are fit for me, to the end that, guiding myself wisely therein, I may preserve my life for the Danes and the memory of my late deceased father; for the desire of revenging his death is so engraven in my heart, that, if I die not shortly, I hope to take such and so great vengeance, that these countries shall for ever speak thereof. Nevertheless, I must stay the time, means, and occasion, lest by making overgreat haste I be now the cause of mine own sudden ruin and overthrow, and by that means end, before I begin to effect, my heart's desire. To conclude, weep not, madam, to see my folly; but rather sigh and lament your own offence, tormenting your conscience in regard of the infamy that hath so defiled the ancient

renown and glory that in times past honoured Queen Geruth; desiring you, for the surplus of my proceedings, above all things, as you love your own life and welfare, that neither the king nor any other may by any means know mine intent; and let me alone with the rest, for I hope in the end to bring my purpose to effect.'

Although the queen perceived herself nearly touched, and that Hamblet moved her to the quick where she felt herself interested, nevertheless, she forgot all disdain and wrath which thereby she might as then have had, hearing herself so sharply chidden and reproved, for the joy she then conceived to behold the gallant spirit of her son, and to think what she might hope and the easier expect of his great policy and wisdom. But, on the one side, she durst not lift up her eyes to behold him, remembering her offence, and on the other side, she would gladly have embraced her son, in regard of the wise admonitions by him given unto her, which as then quenched the flames of unbridled desire that before had moved her to affect King Fengon, to engraff in her heart the virtuous actions of her lawful spouse, whom inwardly she much lamented, when she beheld the lively image and portraiture of his virtue and great wisdom in her child, representing his father's haughty and valiant heart; and so, overcome and vanquished with this honest passion, and weeping most bitterly, having long time fixed her eyes upon Hamblet, as being ravished into some great and deep contemplation, and as it were wholly amazed,[1] at the last embracing him in her arms, she spake unto him in this manner:—

'I know well, my son, that I have done thee great wrong in marrying with Fengon; but when thou shalt consider the small means of resistance, and the treason of the palace, with the little cause of confidence we are to expect or hope for of the courtiers, all wrought to his will, as also the power he made ready, if I should have refused to like of him, thou wouldst rather excuse, than accuse me of lasciviousness or inconstancy, much less offer me that wrong to suspect that ever thy mother Geruth once consented to the death and

[1] 'But look, amazement on thy mother sits.' *Act* iii. *sc.* 6.

murther of her husband; swearing unto thee by the majesty of the gods, that if it had lain in my power to have resisted the tyrant, although it had been with the loss of my blood, yea, and my life, I would surely have saved the life of my lord and husband, with as good a will and desire as since that time I have often been a means to hinder and impeach the shortening of thy life,[1] which being taken away, I will no longer live here upon earth. For seeing that thy senses are whole and sound, I am in hope to see an easy means invented for the revenging of thy father's death, Nevertheless, mine own sweet son, if thou hast pity of thyself, or care of the memory of thy father, although thou wilt do nothing for her that deserveth not the name of a mother in this respect, I pray thee carry thine affairs wisely; be not hasty nor over-furious in thy enterprises, neither yet advance thyself more than reason shall move thee to effect thy purpose. Thou seest there is not almost any man wherein thou mayest put thy trust, nor any woman to whom I dare utter the least part of my secrets, that would not presently report it to thine adversary. So that if thou chance to do anything that seemeth to proceed of wisdom or policy, he will presently be informed thereof, and I am greatly afraid that the devils have showed him what hath passed at this present between us, or that this murther, that now thou hast committed, be not the cause of both our destructions, which I by no means will seem to know, but will keep secret both thy wisdom and hardy enterprise; beseeching the gods, that they guiding thy heart, directing thy counsels, and prospering thy enterprise, I may see thee possess and enjoy that which is thy right, and wear the crown of Denmark, by the tyrant taken from thee.'

'Madam,' said Hamblet, 'I will put my trust in you, and from henceforth mean not to meddle further with your affairs; beseeching you, as you love your own flesh and blood, that you will from henceforth no more esteem of the adulterer

[1] 'And that your grace hath screened and stood between
Much heat and him.' *Act* iii. *sc.* 4.

mine enemy, whom I will surely kill, or cause to be put to death, in despite of all the devils in hell.'

After this Fengon came to the court again, and asked for him that had received the charge to play the intelligencer; was abashed to hear neither news nor tidings of him, and for that cause asked Hamblet what was become of him. The prince—who, in all the answers that ever he made during his counterfeit madness, never strayed from the truth, as a generous mind is a mortal enemy to untruth—answered that the counsellor he sought for was gone down through the vault, where, being choked, the hogs meeting him had filled their bellies.

Chapter IV.—A man would have judged anything, rather than that Hamblet had committed that murther; nevertheless, Fengon could not content himself, but still his mind gave him that the fool would play him some trick, and willingly would have killed him; but he feared King Roderick his grandfather, and further durst not offend the queen, mother to the fool, whom she loved and much cherished. And in that conceit, seeking to be rid of him, determined to do it by the aid of a stranger, making the King of England minister of his massacring resolution, to whom he purposed to send him, and by letters desire him to put him to death.

Hamblet, understanding that he should be sent into England, presently doubted the occasion of his voyage; and for that cause, speaking to the queen, desired her not to make any show of grief for his departure; desiring her further that she should hang the hall with tapestry, and keep the brands for him which he had sharpened at the points. Lastly, he counselled her that, the year after his departure being accomplished, she should celebrate his funeral, assuring her that at the same instant she should see him return unto her.

Now, to bear him company, were assigned two of Fengon's faithful ministers,[1] bearing letters engraved in wood, that contained Hamblet's death, in such sort as he had advertised the King of England. But the subtle Danish prince, being

[1] Comp. with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

at sea, whilst his companions slept, having read the letters, and known his uncle's great treason, with the wicked and villainous minds of the two courtiers that led him to the slaughter, rased out the letters that concerned his death, and instead thereof graved others, with commission to the King of England to hang his two companions; and, not content to turn the death they had devised against him upon their own necks, wrote further, that King Fengon willed him to give his daughter to Hamblet in marriage.

NOTE.—The sequel of the *Historie of Hamblet* is quite different from the play, as will appear from the following analysis:—On Hamblet's arrival in England, his companions are put to death, and he is promised the king's daughter in marriage: after staying there a year he returns to Denmark, and arrives on the very day on which his funeral is solemnized. His return causes great astonishment. At a banquet in the palace the nobles become intoxicated, and fall asleep in the banquet-room; whereupon Hamblet gathers round them the chamber-hangings, fastened with the wooden skewers he had prepared, and, while they are thus benetted and unable to extricate themselves, sets fire to the palace. He then rushes into Fengon's chamber and stabs him to death. The people, variously affected by the destruction of the king and nobles, are harangued at great length by Hamblet, who vindicates his conduct so much to their satisfaction that they elect him king. After his coronation, he proceeds to England, and marries both the king's daughter and a Scottish princess. His death being secretly purposed by the King of England, Hamblet kills him, and goes to Denmark with his two wives, one of whom betrays him and he is slain by Wiglerus, the successor of Roderick.

REMARKS OF VARIOUS AUTHORS

ON

SHAKSPEARE'S 'HAMLET.'

'HAMLET is the only son of the King of Denmark, at a period when Denmark is a powerful military state, showing its strength against England by sea, Poland by land, and Norway doubtless by both; and when the kings, though usually chosen according to their claim by birth, are yet elected; and when therefore the presumptive heir has special need and spur to distinguish himself and prove his qualifications in the eyes of the nation. And these qualifications are not merely military, for the nation is not a horde of barbarian warriors, but a state which maintains its superiority as much by its policy as its arms. Indeed, so advanced is it in civilisation, that though it has a powerful national Christian Church, the priests of which, though half yielding, half maintain their canons against the will of the crown, still the councillors of state and ambassadors are laymen, though not soldiers as far as appears. In a word—the wars and treaties, the state councils and embassies, the players, the coroner's inquests and Christian burials, the awakened wits of the peasants, the refinements of the courtiers, and the education of the young nobles finished at the German university or the French capital, all mark a state of advanced and vigorous national life, much like that which existed in Shakspeare's own day in England. Whether such a state of society has ever been actually found in Denmark is not the question; for it is one of the most undoubted rights of the Romantic Drama, that it shall be free from the laws of time and place, though subject ever to the no less real and binding, though

very different, laws of the imagination.'—STRACHEY'S *Methodical Analysis of Hamlet.*

'Shakspeare's high notion of his calling, that it was scrupulously to hold the mirror up to nature, prevented him from becoming, like less consummate artists, his own interpreter through the mouth of his characters. His *dramatis personæ* speak nothing which they might not be supposed to say under the actual circumstances in which they are placed; and if the spectator is unable so far to identify himself with their mood and feelings as to follow the workings of their minds, Shakspeare, with a proud faithfulness to his own genius, preferred that his meaning should be lost rather than deviate a hair's breadth from truth. A vast deal that is most admirable in him has for this reason been overlooked, or misconceived and censured, and is only by slow degrees dragged forth to light. . . . . Every word that drops from the lips of Shakspeare's personages is the appropriate expression of their inward feelings; and owing to that characteristic we have mentioned of the mighty master—that he will not stoop to be his own expositor in violation of nature—we miss the spirit in which they speak, unless we note accurately their particular position at the time. It is from the neglect of this precaution that the opening of Hamlet, which is alive with excitement, striking contrasts, and the most delicate touches of nature, seems to have been taken by the editors, old and new, for nothing more than an unimpassioned conversation between two sentinels.'[1]—*Quarterly Review*, vol. lxxix. (1847).

'This soliloquy ["O, that this too too solid flesh," &c.], the first full expression we have of Hamlet's actual feelings, deserves particular consideration from those who feel any interest in the question of his real state of mind throughout the play. It seems distinctly to reveal both his mental constitution and the already existing disturbance in his feelings,

[1] All Shakspeare's opening scenes are important in relation to the play. An admirable analysis of the opening scene of 'Hamlet' is given in the excellent article from which the above extract is made.

amounting to a predisposition to actual unsoundness. His mind is morbidly and constantly occupied with one set of thoughts: the indecorous marriage of his uncle with his mother had usurped all his attention. He is even at this time far advanced into that miserable condition which he describes much later: he has lost all his mirth; he is weary of all the uses of the world; he is weary of life. Of his father's ghost he has at this time heard nothing; of his father's murder no suspicion has ever been dreamed of by him. No thought of feigning melancholy can have entered his mind; but he is even now most heavily shaken and discomposed—indeed so violently, that his reason, although not dethroned, is certainly well-nigh deranged. The explanation would seem only to be found in his original constitution: he is accomplished, but inactive; he meditates much, he does nothing; events agitate, but do not move him. The court is assuming its ordinary aspect, he regards it not; the state is threatened with imminent dangers, he is not stirred to action; his own wrongs excite him to no resolve, to no remonstrance, and only drive him to passionate declamation and the thoughts of getting rid of life by self-murder. Hamlet has read and thought much, has passed happy hours with Ophelia, has lived for the most part in a charmed world of imagination and sentiment; he is constitutionally deficient in that quality of a healthy brain or mind which may be termed its elasticity, in virtue of which the changes and chances of the mutable world should be sustained without damage, and in various trials stedfastness and trust still preserved.'—DR. CONOLLY'S *Study of Hamlet.*

'Hamlet mentions to his friends a deliberate purpose of "putting an antic disposition on," and he is seen fulfilling his intention; and hence it is inferred that all his insanity is feigned. On the other hand, there is observed a wildness of demeanour which cannot thus be accounted for; and hence it is inferred that it is real insanity. Now, the human mind is not such a simple machine as this, and Shakspeare knew it too well to treat it so. The truth, as well as I can

state a matter so abstruse, seems to be this: that, from combination of influences, the mind of Hamlet was in a state of undue susceptibility of both unnatural excitement and depression; and then further agitated by a supernatural visitation, by which, in his own words, he felt his "disposition horridly shaken with thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls." This visible and audible communion with the dead has so convulsed all the spiritual elements of his nature, that he becomes conscious that the sovereignty of his reason was in jeopardy; and it is that very consciousness—the apprehension of insanity—which suggests to an intellect so active the thought of feigning madness—the device of assuming an antic disposition, which would give them an unwonted freedom, and which might always be controlled by his habitual intellectual strength. It comes then to this—that there was disorder in the mind—a disturbance of his intellect, something more than that which he was feigning; but, if this question of insanity involve the question whether his mind ceased to be under the mastery of his will, assuredly there was no such aberration.'—REED'S *Lectures on Tragic Poetry.*

'Conceive a prince such as is here painted, and that his father suddenly dies. Ambition and the love of rule are not the passions that inspire him. As a king's son he would have been contented; but now he is first constrained to consider the difference which separates a sovereign from a subject. The crown was not hereditary; yet a longer possession of it by his father would have strengthened the pretensions of an only son, and secured his hopes of the succession. In place of this, he now beholds himself excluded by his uncle, in spite of specious promises, most probably for ever. He is now poor in goods and favour, and a stranger in the scene which from youth he had looked upon as his inheritance. His temper here assumes its first mournful tinge. He feels that now he is not more—that he is less—than a private nobleman; he offers himself as the servant of everyone; he is not courteous and condescending, he is needy and degraded.

'His past condition he remembers as a vanished dream.

It is in vain his uncle strives to cheer him—to present his situation in another point of view. The feeling of his nothingness will not leave him.

'The second stroke that came upon him wounded deeper, bowed still more. It was the marriage of his mother. The faithful tender son had yet a mother, when his father passed away. He hoped, in the company of his surviving noble-minded parent, to reverence the heroic form of the departed; but his mother too he loses, and it is something worse than death that robs him of her. The trustful image, which a good child loves to form of its parents, is gone. With the dead there is no help; on the living no hold. She also is a woman, and her name is Frailty, like that of all her sex.

'Now first does he feel himself completely bent and orphaned; and no happiness of life can repay what he has lost. Not reflective or sorrowful by nature, reflection and sorrow have become for him a heavy obligation. It is thus that we see him first enter on the scene. Figure to yourselves this youth, this son of princes; conceive him vividly, bring his state before your eyes, and then observe him when he learns that his father's spirit walks; stand by him in the terrors of the night, when the venerable ghost itself appears before him. A horrid shudder passes over him; he speaks to the mysterious form; he sees it beckon him; he follows it and hears. The fearful accusation of his uncle rings in his ears; the summons to revenge, and the piercing, oft-repeated prayer, "Remember me!"

'And when the ghost has vanished, who is it that stands before us? A young hero panting for vengeance? A prince by birth, rejoicing to be called to punish the usurper of his crown? No: trouble and astonishment take hold of the solitary young man: he grows bitter against smiling villains, swears that he will not forget the spirit, and concludes with the significant ejaculation—

> The time is out of joint: O cursed spite!
> That ever I was born to set it right!

In these words, I imagine, will be found the key to Hamlet's whole procedure. To me it is clear that Shakspeare meant

in the present case to represent the effects of a great action laid upon a soul unfit for the performance of it. In this view the whole piece seems to me to be composed. There is an oak-tree planted in a costly jar, which should have borne only pleasant flowers in its bosom;—the roots expand, the jar is shivered.

'A lovely, pure, noble, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which forms a hero, sinks beneath a burden which it cannot bear, and must not cast away. All duties are holy for him; the present is too hard. Impossibilities have been required of him—not in themselves impossibilities, but such for him. He winds, and turns, and torments himself; he advances and recoils; is ever put in mind, ever puts himself in mind; at last does all but lose his purpose from his thoughts; yet still without recovering his peace of mind.'—GOETHE.

'Perhaps all our really distinct criticisms may be traced to two originals, those of Goethe or Coleridge. Goethe, as his wont is, describes with exquisite transparency of thought and word all that meets his piercing, passionless, comprehensive gaze, as he looks on Hamlet *from without*. Coleridge, in *his* way, contemplates his subject *from within*, and the result shows the superiority of his method. The sum of Coleridge's criticism is contained in the following extract:—

'"I believe the character of Hamlet may be traced to Shakspeare's deep and accurate science in mental philosophy. Indeed, that the character must have some connection with the fundamental laws of our nature, may be assumed from the fact that Hamlet has been the darling of every country in which the literature of England has been fostered. In order to understand him, it is essential that we should reflect on the constitution of our own minds. Man is distinguished from the brute animals in proportion as thought prevails over sense: but in the healthy processes of the mind a balance is constantly maintained between the impressions from outward objects and the inward operations of the intellect; for if there be an overbalance in the contemplative faculty, man

thereby becomes the creature of mere meditation, and loses his natural power of action. Now one of Shakspeare's modes of creating characters is, to conceive any one intellectual or moral faculty in morbid excess, and then to place himself, Shakspeare, thus mutilated or diseased, under given circumstances. In Hamlet he seems to have wished to exemplify the moral necessity of a due balance between our attention to the objects of our senses, and our meditation on the workings of our minds—an equilibrium between the real and the imaginary worlds. In Hamlet this balance is disturbed: his thoughts and the images of his fancy are far more vivid than his actual perceptions, and his very perceptions, instantly passing through the medium of his contemplations, acquire as they pass a form and a colour not naturally their own. Hence we see a great, an almost enormous intellectual activity, and a proportionate aversion to real action consequent upon it, with all its symptoms and accompanying qualities. This character Shakspeare places in circumstances under which it is obliged to act on the spur of the moment: Hamlet is brave and careless of death; but he vacillates from sensibility, and procrastinates from thought, and loses the power of action in the energy of resolve. Thus it is that this tragedy presents a direct contrast to that of *Macbeth;* the one proceeds with the utmost slowness, the other with a crowded and breathless activity.

'"The effect of this overbalance of the imaginative power is beautifully illustrated in the everlasting broodings and superfluous activities of Hamlet's mind, which, unseated from its healthy relation, is constantly occupied with the world within, and abstracted from the world without—giving a substance to shadows, and throwing a mist over all commonplace actualities. It is the nature of thought to be indefinite—definiteness belongs to external imagery alone. Hence it is that the sense of sublimity arises, not from the sight of an outward object, but from the beholder's reflection upon it—not from the sensuous impression, but from the imaginative reflex. Few have seen a celebrated waterfall without feeling somewhat akin to disappointment: it is only subsequently that the image comes back full into the mind, and brings with it

a train of grand or beautiful associations. Hamlet feels this; his senses are in a state of trance, and he looks upon external things as hieroglyphics. His soliloquy—

> O, that this too too solid flesh would melt, &c.—

springs from that craving after the indefinite, for that which is not, which most easily besets men of genius; and the self-delusion common to this temper of mind is finely exemplified in the character which Hamlet gives of himself:—

> It cannot be
> But I am pigeon-livered, and lack gall
> To make oppression bitter.

He mistakes the seeing his chains for the breaking of them, delays action till action is of no use, and dies the victim of mere circumstance and accident." [COLERIDGE'S *Literary Remains*].

'This masterly view of Hamlet's character needs no commendation of mine: it is, I suppose, universally recognised by all students of Shakspeare in the present day as *the* criticism. But though Coleridge is supported by Goethe, Schlegel, and all the commentators that I know of, in his assertion that Hamlet "delays action till action is of no use, and dies the victim of mere circumstance and accident," I must hesitate to agree to his conclusion. Nay, presumptuous as I feel it to be, to set myself against such an array of authorities, I must believe that Hamlet, being exactly the character that Coleridge describes him, does yet end by mastering that, his characteristic defect, and that he dies, not a victim, but a martyr—winning, not losing, the cause for which he dies. I believe this is the actual plot of the tragedy, and consequently that Shakspeare's purpose was not merely "to exemplify the moral necessity of a due balance between our attention to the objects of our senses, and our meditation on the workings of our minds," by exhibiting the fate of a "victim" to the want of that balance; but the far higher, more moral, more practical, more English purpose, of teaching how a good man might triumph, though through death, over this worst of all enemies, the disease of the inner life traitorously conspiring with outward circumstances to betray him.'[1]—STRACHEY'S *Analysis of Hamlet.*

[1] See *Note* 2 at the end of the Play.

'*Hamlet* is singular in its kind: a tragedy of thought inspired by continual and never-satisfied meditation on human destiny and the dark perplexity of the events of this world, and calculated to call forth the very same meditation in the minds of the spectators. This enigmatical work resembles those irrational equations in which a fraction of unknown magnitude always remains, that will in no way admit of solution. Much has been said, much written, on this piece, and yet no thinking head who anew expresses himself on it, will (in his view of the connexion and the signification of all the parts) entirely coincide with his predecessors. What naturally most astonishes us, is the fact that with such hidden purposes, with a foundation laid in such unfathomable depth, the whole should, at a first view, exhibit an extremely popular appearance. The dread appearance of the Ghost takes possession of the mind and the imagination almost at the very commencement; then the play within the play, in which, as in a glass, we see reflected the crime, whose fruitlessly attempted punishment constitutes the subject-matter of the piece; the alarm with which it fills the King; Hamlet's pretended and Ophelia's real madness: her death and burial; the meeting of Hamlet and Laertes at the grave; their combat, and the grand determination; lastly, the appearance of the young hero Fortinbras, who, with warlike pomp, pays the last honours to an extinct family of kings; the interspersion of comic characteristic scenes with Polonius, the courtiers, and the grave-diggers, which have all of them their signification—all this fills the stage with an animated and varied movement. The only circumstance from which this piece might be judged to be less theatrical than other tragedies of Shakspeare is, that in the last scenes the main action either stands still or appears to retrograde. This, however, was inevitable, and lay in the nature of the subject. The whole is intended to show that a calculating consideration, which exhausts all the relations and possible consequences of a deed, must cripple the power of acting: as Hamlet himself expresses it:—

And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;

And enterprises of great pith and moment,
With this regard, their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

With respect to Hamlet's character: I cannot, as I understand the poet's views, pronounce altogether so favourable a sentence upon it as Goethe does. He is, it is true, of a highly cultivated mind, a prince of royal manners, endowed with the finest sense of propriety, susceptible of noble ambition, and open in the highest degree to an enthusiastic admiration of that excellence in others of which he himself is deficient. He acts the part of madness with unrivalled power, convincing the persons who are sent to examine into his supposed loss of reason, merely by telling them unwelcome truths, and rallying them with the most caustic wit. But in the resolutions which he so often embraces, and always leaves unexecuted, his weakness is too apparent: he does himself only justice when he implies that there is no greater dissimilarity than between himself and Hercules. He is not solely impelled by necessity to artifice and dissimulation: he has a natural inclination for crooked ways; he is a hypocrite towards himself; his far-fetched scruples are often mere pretexts to cover his want of determination: thoughts, as he says, on a different occasion, which have

——— but one part wisdom
And ever three parts coward.

He has been chiefly condemned both for his harshness in repulsing the love of Ophelia, which he himself had cherished, and for his insensibility at her death. But he is too much overwhelmed with his own sorrow to have any compassion to spare for others; besides, his outward indifference gives us by no means the measure of his internal perturbation. On the other hand, we evidently perceive in him a malicious joy, when he has succeeded in getting rid of his enemies, more through necessity and accident, which alone are able to impel him to quick and decisive measures, than by the merit of his own courage, as he himself confesses after the murder of Polonius, and with respect to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet has no firm belief either in himself or in anything else: from expressions of religious confidence he passes over

to sceptical doubts; he believes in the ghost of his father, as long as he sees it, but as soon as it has disappeared, it appears to him almost in the light of a deception.[1] He has even gone so far as to say, 'there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so;' with him the poet loses himself here in labyrinths of thought, in which neither end nor beginning is discoverable. The stars themselves, from the course of events, afford no answer to the question so urgently proposed to them. A voice from another world, commissioned, it would appear, by heaven, demands vengeance for a monstrous enormity, and the demand remains without effect; the criminals are at last punished, but, as it were, by an accidental blow, and not in the solemn way requisite to convey to the world a warning example of justice; irresolute foresight, cunning treachery, and impetuous rage, hurry on to a common destruction; the less guilty and the innocent are equally involved in the general ruin. The destiny of humanity is there exhibited as a gigantic Sphinx, which threatens to precipitate into the abyss of scepticism all who are unable to solve her dreadful enigmas.

'As one example of the many niceties of Shakspeare which have never been understood, I may allude to the style in which the player's speech about Hecuba is conceived. It has been the subject of much controversy among the commentators, whether this was borrowed by Shakspeare from himself or from another, and whether, in the praise of the piece of which it is supposed to be a part, he was speaking seriously, or merely meant to ridicule the tragical bombast of his contemporaries. It seems never to have occurred to them that this speech must not be judged of by itself, but in connection with the place where it is introduced. To distinguish it in the play itself as dramatic poetry, it was necessary that it should rise above the dignified poetry of the

[1] It has been censured as a contradiction, that Hamlet in the soliloquy on self-murder should say,

> The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
> No traveller returns———

For was not the Ghost a returned traveller? Shakspeare, however, purposely wished to show, that Hamlet could not fix himself in any conviction of any kind whatever.

former in the same proportion that generally theatrical elevation soars above simple nature. Hence Shakspeare has composed the play in Hamlet altogether in sententious rhymes full of antitheses. But this solemn and measured tone did not suit a speech in which violent emotion ought to prevail, and the poet had no other expedient than the one of which he made choice: overcharging the pathos. The language of the speech in question is certainly falsely emphatical; but yet this fault is so mixed up with true grandeur, that a player practised in artificially calling forth in himself the emotion he is imitating, may certainly be carried away by it. Besides, it will hardly be believed that Shakspeare knew so little of his art, as not to be aware that a tragedy in which Æneas had to make a lengthy epic relation of a transaction that happened so long before as the destruction of Troy, could neither be dramatical nor theatrical.'—SCHLEGEL.

'Amid the endless discussions raised by the character of Hamlet, there is a perfect unanimity as to his mental supremacy. "The play," says a writer in "Blackwood's Magazine," "is a singular example of a piece of great length resting its interest upon the delineation of one character; for Hamlet, his discourses, and the changes of his mind, are all the play. The other persons, even his father's ghost, are important through him; and in himself it is the variation of his mind, and not the varying events of his life, that affords the interest." The simplest criticism is commonly the best. There are few remarks on Shakspeare's plays more just and admirable than this. The universality of Shakspeare's genius is in some sort reflected in Hamlet. He has a mind wise and witty, abstract and practical; the utmost reach of philosophical contemplation is mingled with the most penetrating sagacity in the affairs of life; playful jest, biting satire, sparkling repartee, with the darkest and deepest thoughts that can agitate man. He exercises all his various faculties with surprising readiness. He passes without an effort "from grave to gay, from lively to severe,"—from his everyday character to personated lunacy. He divines, with the

rapidity of lightning, the nature and motives of those who are brought into contact with him, fits in a moment his bearing and retorts to their individual peculiarities; is equally at home whether he is mocking Polonius with hidden raillery, or dissipating Ophelia's dream of love, or crushing the sponges with sarcasm and invective, or talking euphuism with Osric, and satirising while he talks it; whether he is uttering wise maxims, or welcoming the players with facetious graciousness —probing the inmost souls of others, or sounding the mysteries of his own. His philosophy stands out conspicuous among the brilliant faculties which contend for the mastery. It is the quality which gives weight and dignity to the rest. It intermingles with all his actions. He traces the most trifling incidents up to their general laws. His natural disposition is to lose himself in contemplation. He goes thinking out of the world. The commonest ideas that pass through his mind are invested with a wonderful freshness and originality. His meditations in the churchyard are on the trite notion that all ambition leads but to the grave. But what condensation, what variety, what picturesqueness, what intense unmitigated gloom! It is the finest sermon that was ever preached against the vanities of life.

'So far, we imagine, all are agreed. But the motives which induce Hamlet to defer his revenge are still, and perhaps will ever remain, debateable ground. The favourite doctrine of late is, that the thinking part of Hamlet predominated over the active—that he was as weak and vacillating in performance as he was great in speculation. If this theory were borne out by his general conduct, it would no doubt amply account for his procrastination; but there is nothing to countenance and much to refute the idea. Shakspeare has endowed him with a vast energy of will. There could be no sterner resolve than to abandon every purpose of existence that he might devote himself unfettered to his revenge; nor was ever resolution better observed. He breaks through his passion for Ophelia, and keeps it down, under the most trying circumstances, with such inflexible firmness, that an eloquent critic has seriously questioned whether his attachment was real. The determination of his character appears

again at the death of Polonius. An indecisive mind would have been shocked, if not terrified, at the deed. Hamlet dismisses him with a few contemptuous words as a man would brush away a fly. He talks with even greater indifference of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, whom he sends "to sudden death, not shriving time allowed." He has on these, and, indeed, on all occasions, a short and absolute way which only belongs to resolute souls. The features developed in his very hesitation to kill the King are inconsistent with the notion that his hand refuses to perform what his head contrives. He is always trying to persuade himself into a conviction that it is his duty, instead of seeking for evasions.[1] He is seized with a savage joy when the play supplies him with indubitable proof of his uncle's guilt. His language then to Horatio is—

> ——is't not perfect conscience
> To quit him with this arm?

He wants, it is clear, neither will nor nerve to strike the blow. There is perhaps one supposition that will satisfy all the phenomena, and it has, to us, the recommendation that we think it is the solution suggested by Shakspeare himself. Hamlet, in a soliloquy, charges the delay on—

> Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
> Of thinking too precisely on th' event.

The oblivion is merely the effect of the primary cause—"the craven scruple"—the conscience which renders him a coward. His uncle, after all, is king; he is the brother of his father, and the husband of his mother, and it was inevitable that he

1 His reasons for not killing the King when he is praying have been held to be an excuse. But if Shakspeare had anticipated the criticism, he could not have guarded against it more effectually. Hamlet has just uttered the soliloquy—

> ——— Now could I drink hot blood,
> And do such bitter business as the day
> Would quake to look on.

In this frame he passes his uncle's closet, and is for once, at least, equal to any emergency. His first thought is to kill him at his devotions; his second, that in that case Claudius will go to heaven. Instantly his father's sufferings rise into his mind; he contrasts the happy future of the criminal with the purgatory of the victim, and the contemplation exasperates him into a genuine desire for a fuller revenge. The threat relieves him from the reproach of inactivity, and he falls back into his former self.

should shrink, in his cooler moments, from becoming his assassin. His hatred to his uncle, who has disgraced his family and disappointed his ambition, gives him personal inducements to revenge, which further blunt his purpose by leading him to doubt the purity of his motives. The admonition of the Ghost to him is, not to taint his mind in the prosecution of his end: and no sooner has the Ghost vanished than Hamlet, invoking the aid of supernatural powers, exclaims—

> O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?
> And shall I couple hell?—O fie!—

But the hell, whose support he rejects, is for ever returning to his mind and startling his conscience. It is this that makes him wish for the confirmation of the play, for evil spirits may have abused him. It is this which begets the apathy he terms oblivion, for inaction affords relief to doubt. It is this which produces its inconsistencies, for conscience calls him different ways, and when he obeys in one direction he is haunted by the feeling that he should have gone in the other. If he contemplated the performance of a deed which looks outwardly more like murder than judicial retribution, he trembles lest, after all, he should be perpetrating an unnatural crime; or if, on the other hand, he turns to view his uncle's misdeeds, he fancies there is more of cowardly scrupulosity than justice in his backwardness, and he abounds in self-reproaches at the weakness of his hesitation. And thus he might for ever have halted between two opinions, if the King himself, by filling up the measure of his iniquities, had not swept away his scruples.'—*Quarterly Review*, vol. lxxix.

'Shall we,' says Dr. Bucknill, 'think the less nobly of him because his hand is not ready to shed kindred blood; because, gifted with godlike discourse of reason, he does look before and after; because he does not take the law in his own hands upon his oppressor, until he has obtained conclusive evidence of his guilt; that he seeks to make sure he is the natural justiciar of his murdered father, and not an assassin instigated by hatred and selfish revenge?'—*Psychology of Shakspeare.*

'Polonius is a man bred in courts, exercised in business, stored with observation, confident in his knowledge, proud of his eloquence, and declining into dotage. His mode of oratory is truly represented as designed to ridicule the practice of those times, of prefaces that made no introduction, and of method that embarrassed rather than explained. This part of his character is accidental, the rest is natural. Such a man is positive and confident, because he knows that his mind was once strong, and knows not that it is become weak. Such a man excels in general principles, but fails in the particular application. He is knowing in retrospect, and ignorant in foresight. While he depends upon his memory, and can draw from his repositories of knowledge, he utters weighty sentences, and gives useful counsel; but as the mind in its enfeebled state cannot be kept long busy and intent, the old man is subject to sudden dereliction of his faculties, he loses the order of his ideas, and entangles himself in his own thoughts, till he recovers the leading principle, and falls again into his former train. This idea of dotage encroaching upon wisdom, will solve all the phenomena of the character of Polonius.'—DR. JOHNSON.

'Of the petty anachronisms which send Hamlet to Wittemberg, which allow Ophelia to call for a coach, and the King's palace to resound with salvos of artillery, we make small account. . . . The great length appears by no means an imperfection of this drama as a composition, whatever it may be as an acting play. The analysis of the motives of human action, which is the great object of this work, could not have been effected if the action were rapid. Rapidity of action is inconsistent with philosophic self-analysing motives and modes of thought; while the slow and halting progress of the action, in this drama, not only affords to the character space and verge enough to unfold its inmost peculiarities of thought and feeling, but develops in the mind of the reader a state of metaphysical receptivity scarcely less essential to its full appreciation.'—DR. BUCKNILL'S *Psychology of Shakspeare.*

HAMLET

PRINCE OF DENMARK.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

	(*Appears*)
CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark . .	Act I. sc. 2. Act II. sc. 2. Act III. sc. 1; sc. 2; sc. 3. Act IV. sc. 1; sc. 3; sc. 5; sc. 6. Act V. sc. 1; sc. 2.
HAMLET, *son to the former, and nephew to the present* King . .	Act I. sc. 2; sc. 4; sc. 5. Act II. sc. 2. Act III. sc. 1; sc. 2; sc. 3; sc. 4. Act IV. sc. 2; sc. 3; sc. 4. Act V. sc. 1; sc. 2.
POLONIUS, *Lord Chamberlain* . .	Act I. sc. 2; sc. 3. Act II. sc. 1; sc. 2. Act III. sc. 1; sc. 2; sc. 3; sc. 4.
HORATIO, *friend to* Hamlet . .	Act I. sc. 1; sc. 2; sc. 4; sc. 5. Act III. sc. 2. Act IV. sc. 5; sc. 6. Act V. sc. 1; sc. 2.
LAERTES, *son to* Polonius . .	Act I. sc. 2; sc. 3. Act IV. sc. 5; sc. 6. Act V. sc. 1; sc. 2.
VOLTIMAND, *a courtier*	Act I. sc. 2. Act II. sc. 2.
CORNELIUS, *a courtier*	Act I. sc. 2. Act II. sc. 2.
ROSENCRANTZ, *a courtier* . . .	Act II. sc. 2. Act III. sc. 1; sc. 2; sc. 3. Act IV. sc. 1; sc. 2; sc. 3; sc. 4.
GUILDENSTERN, *a courtier* . . .	Act II. sc. 2. Act III. sc. 1; sc. 2; sc. 3. Act IV. sc. 1; sc. 2; sc. 3; sc. 4.
OSRIC, *a courtier*	Act V. sc. 2.
A Courtier	Act IV. sc. 5.
A Priest	Act V. sc. 1.
MARCELLUS, *an officer*	Act I. sc. 1; sc. 2; sc. 4; sc. 5.
BERNARDO, *an officer*	Act I. sc. 1; sc. 2.
FRANCISCO, *a soldier*	Act I. sc. 1.
REYNALDO, *servant to* Polonius .	Act II. sc. 1.
A Captain	Act IV. sc. 4.
An Ambassador	Act V. sc. 2.
Ghost of Hamlet's Father . . .	Act I. sc. 1; sc. 4; sc. 5. Act III. sc. 4.
FORTINBRAS, *Prince of Norway* .	Act IV. sc. 4. Act V. sc. 2.
GERTRUDE, *Queen of Denmark, and mother of* Hamlet	Act I. sc. 2. Act II. sc. 2. Act III. sc. 1; sc. 2; sc. 4. Act IV. sc. 1; sc. 5; sc. 6. Act V. sc. 1; sc. 2.
OPHELIA, *daughter of* Polonius .	Act I. sc. 3. Act II. sc. 1. Act III. sc. 1; sc. 2. Act IV. sc. 5.

Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Players, Grave-diggers, Sailors, Messengers, and other Attendants.

SCENE—ELSINORE.

HAMLET

PRINCE OF DENMARK.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—Elsinore. *A Platform before the Castle.*

FRANCISCO *on his post. Enter to him* BERNARDO.

Ber. Who 's there ?[1]
Fran. Nay, answer me:
Stand, and unfold yourself.
Ber. Long live the king![2]
Fran. Bernardo ?
Ber. He.
Fran. You come most carefully upon your hour.
Ber. 'T is now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco
Fran. For this relief, much thanks: 't is bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.
Ber. Have you had quiet guard ?
Fran. Not a mouse stirring.

[1] *Who's there ?*] These words are significant of some agitation in the speaker.
[2] *Long live the King !*] The watchword.

Ber. Well, good night.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals[1] of my watch, bid them make haste.
Fran. I think I hear them.—Stand, ho! who 's there?

Enter HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS.

Hor. Friends to this ground.
Mar. And liegemen to the Dane.
Fran. Give you good night.[2]
Mar. O, farewell,[3] honest soldier:
Who hath relieved you?
Fran. Bernardo hath my place.
Give you good night. [*Exit* FRAN.
Mar. Holla! Bernardo!
Ber. Say, what, is Horatio there?
Hor. A piece of him.[4]
Ber. Welcome, Horatio; welcome, good Marcellus.
Mar. What, has this thing appeared again to-night?
Ber. I have seen nothing.
Mar. Horatio says, 't is but our fantasy;
And will not let belief take hold of him,
Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us:
Therefore I have entreated him along,
With us to watch the minutes of this night;
That, if again this apparition come,
He may approve our eyes, and speak to it.[5]
Hor. Tush! Tush! 't will not appear.

[1] *Rivals.*] Partners. Compare *rivality* in *Ant. and Cleop.* iii. 6.
[2] *Give you.*] An abridgment of *God give you.*
[3] *O, farewell.*] Marcellus uses the interjection, as not having known that Francisco had been relieved.
[4] *A piece of him.*] This is merely a jocular expression, indicating Horatio's freedom from all apprehension about the ghost.
[5] *Approve our eyes,* &c.] Assure himself of what we have seen, and speak to it, as only a scholar can do. (*See* Note 2, p. 5.)

Ber. Sit down awhile;
And let us once again assail your ears,
That are so fortified against our story,
What we two nights have seen.
Hor. Well, sit we down,
And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.
Ber. Last night of all,
When yond same star that 's westward from the pole
Had made his course to illume that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,
The bell then beating one,—
Mar. Peace! break thee off;[1] look, where it comes again!

Enter GHOST.

Ber. In the same figure, like the king that 's dead.
Mar. Thou art a scholar, speak to it, Horatio.[2]
Ber. Looks it not like the king? mark it, Horatio.
Hor. Most like:—it harrows me with fear and wonder.
Ber. It would be spoke to.
Mar. Question it, Horatio.
Hor. What art thou, that usurp'st[3] this time of night,
Together with that fair and warlike form
In which the majesty of buried Denmark
Did sometimes march? by heaven I charge thee, speak.
Mar. It is offended.

[1] *Break thee off.*] *Thee* seems used for *thou*, in such phrases as *fare thee well, haste thee, hie thee, &c.*; and this usage, perhaps, led to a further corruption in such forms as 'we will haste us,' Hamlet, iii. 3.

[2] *Speak to it, Horatio.*] The forms of exorcism were usually in Latin, the language of the Church Service; and scholarship was thought to have great influence over ghosts. In Fletcher's Night Walker one says 'Let's call the butler up, for he speaks Latin, and that will daunt the devil.' ii. 1.

[3] *Usurp'st.*] Takest, appropriatest.

Ber. See! it stalks away.
Hor. Stay! speak! speak! I charge thee, speak!
Mar. 'T is gone, and will not answer. [*Exit* GHOST.
Ber. How now, Horatio? you tremble, and look pale:
Is not this something more than fantasy?
What think you on 't?
Hor. Before my God, I might not this believe,
Without the sensible and true avouch
Of mine own eyes.
Mar. Is it not like the king?
Hor. As thou art to thyself:
Such was the very armour he had on,
When he the ambitious Norway combated;[1]
So frowned he once, when, in an angry parle,
He smote the sledded Polack on the ice.[2]
'T is strange.
Mar. Thus twice before, and jump[3] at this dead hour,
With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.
Hor. In what particular thought to work, I know not;
But, in the gross and scope of my opinion,
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.

[1] *The ambitious Norway.*] Old Fortinbras, king of Norway, presently again referred to by Horatio, as having been 'pricked on by a most emulate pride' to challenge the king of Denmark in single combat, was slain in the contest; his brother, according to Shakspeare, then succeeded to the throne of Norway; and, at the close of the play, Fortinbras' son, young Fortinbras, is introduced as likely to be elected king of Denmark.

[2] *Sledded Polack.*] Sledged Polander. Fr. *Polaque.* Botero's Relations of the World, has 'the forces of the Polacks;' and Webster's White Devil, ii. 'I scorn him like a shaved Polack.' The word occurs again in Hamlet, iv. 4.

[3] *Jump.*] Exactly, concurrently. Near the end of this play we have 'so jump upon this bloody question,' and in Othello, ii. 3, 'bring him jump when he may Cassio find.' So in First Part of Jeronimo, 'all falls out for the purpose, all hits jump.'

Mar. Good now, sit down, and tell me, he that knows,
Why this same strict and most observant watch
So nightly toils the subject[1] of the land :
And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,
And foreign mart[2] for implements of war :
Why such impress[3] of shipwrights, whose sore task
Does not divide the Sunday from the week :
What might be toward,[4] that this sweaty haste
Doth make the night joint-labourer with the day :—
Who is 't that can inform me ?
Hor. That can I :
At least the whisper goes so : Our last king,
Whose image even but now appeared to us,
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,
Thereto pricked on by a most emulate pride,
Dared to the combat ; in which our valiant Hamlet
(For so this side of our known world esteemed him)
Did slay this Fortinbras ; who, by a sealed compact,
Well ratified by law and heraldry,[5]
Did forfeit with his life,[6] all those his lands

[1] *Subject.*] Subjects. *See Measure for Measure*, p. 62.

[2] *Foreign mart.*] Traffic with other countries. By means of the conversation now entered upon, the soldiers try to regain their composure.

[3] *Impress.*] Impressment. 'Such confidence,' says Lord Campbell, 'has there been in Shakspeare's accuracy, that this passage has been quoted both by text writers and by judges on the bench, as an authority upon the legality of the press-gang, and upon the debated question, whether *shipwrights*, as well as *common seamen*, are liable to be pressed into the service of the royal navy.' Shakspeare's Legal Acquirements.

[4] *Toward.*] In preparation, coming on. Again, near the end of this play, 'What feast is toward in thine eternal cell;' so, in Rom. and Jul., i. 5, 'We have a trifling foolish banquet towards.'

[5] *Law and heraldry.*] Civil law and the rules of chivalry.

[6] *With his life.*] In the event of his being slain.

Which he stood seized of,[1] to the conqueror:
Against the which, a moiety competent[2]
Was gaged by our king; which had returned
To the inheritance of Fortinbras,
Had he been vanquisher; as, by the same covenant
And carriage of the article designed,[3]
His fell to Hamlet: Now, sir, young Fortinbras,
Of unimproved metal, hot and full,[4]
Hath in the skirts of Norway, here and there,
Sharked up[5] a list of lawless resolutes,
For food and diet to some enterprise
That hath a stomach in 't: which is no other
(And it doth well appear unto our state)
But to recover of us, by strong hand
And terms compulsative, those 'foresaid lands
So by his father lost: And this, I take it,
Is the main motive of our preparations,
The source of this our watch, and the chief head
Of this post-haste and romage[6] in the land.

Ber. I think it be no other, but even so:

[1] *Seized of.*] Possessed of.

[2] *Moiety competent.*] Portion of territory equivalent.

[3] *Carriage, &c.*] Import of the condition specified.

[4] *Unimproved.*] Unemployed, not yet put to use.

[5] *Sharked up.*] Got hold of. To shark is to look out for prey. 'Then my hand hath a fling at mine eyes, because they look not out and shark for victuals.' Massinger's Virgin Martyr, iii. 3. Our poet's 'conceit' seems to be, that young Fortinbras, bent on some enterprise that had a *stomach*, that is, temper, in it, got hold of some resolute fellows as food for that stomach, viz., as a means to carry out the enterprise. We have rejected the comma generally placed after the word *diet*, because it destroys the figurative consistency of the passage by implying that the 'lawless resolutes' were to *receive* the 'food and diet' for their service.

[6] *Romage.*] Rummage, bustling about.

Well may it sort[1] that this portentous figure
Comes armed through our watch—so like the king
That was and is the question of these wars.
Hor. A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.
In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead[2]
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets:
As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,
Disasters in the sun;[3] and the moist star,
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.[4]
And even the like precurse of fierce events,
As harbingers preceding still the fates,
And prologue to the omen coming on,

[1] *Sort.*] Suit, accord.

[2] *The graves, &c.*] The portents here referred to were suggested by Ovid, Met. xv.

'They showed signs most manifest of sorrows to ensue;
For battles fighting in the clouds with clashing armour flew,
And dreadful trumpets sounded in the air, and horns eke blew,
As warning men beforehand of the mischief that did brew;
And Phœbus also looking dim did cast a drowsy light
Upon the earth, which seemed likewise to be in sorry plight;
From underneath amid the stars brands oft seemed burning bright.
It often rained drops of blood: the morning star looked blue,
And was bespotted here and there with specks of rusty hue.
The moon had also spots of blood. * * * * *
About the court and every house and churches in the nights
The dogs did howl, and everywhere appeared ghastly sprites.'
Arthur Golding's Translation, 1567.

[3] *Disasters in the sun.*] There is obviously some false reading in this line or the preceding one; or perhaps a whole line has been lost.

[4] *Sick almost to doomsday.*] Sick almost to death or extinction; doomsday being the period of Nature's dissolution.

Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
Unto our climatures and countrymen.[1]

Re-enter GHOST.

But, soft! behold! lo, where it comes again!
I'll cross it, though it blast me.[2]—Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
Speak to me:
If there be any good thing to be done,
That may to thee do ease, and grace to me,
Speak to me:
If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,[4]
O, speak!
Or, if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,
[*Cock crows.*
Speak of it:—stay, and speak!—Stop it, Marcellus.
Mar. Shall I strike at it with my partizan?
Hor. Do, if it will not stand.
Ber. 'T is here!

[1] *Unto our climatures, &c.*] Sandys, in his commentary on the prodigies mentioned by Ovid, says: 'Armed troops of foot and horse in the air we not only read but have heard of in our times. And even this last year, 1629, reported it was by some of good credit, how they saw two opposite battalions lancing out their spears, and discharging, as it were, their muskets in the air.' Again he says: 'The raining of blood must needs be miraculous, whereof many histories, and our own among others, make mention.'

[2] *Though it blast me.*] To cross the path of a spectre was supposed to subject a person to its malignant influence.

[3] *And grace to me.*] And honour to me; and not dishonour me.

[4] *Which happily, &c.*] Which perhaps our foreknowing it may enable us to avoid.

Hor. 'T is here!
Mar. 'T is gone! [*Exit* GHOST.
We do it wrong, being so majestical,
To offer it the show of violence;
For it is, as the air, invulnerable,
And our vain blows malicious mockery.
Ber. It was about to speak when the cock crew.
Hor. And then it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard,
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day; and, at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,[1]
The extravagant and erring spirit hies[2]
To his confine: and of the truth herein
This present object made probation.
Mar. It faded on the crowing of the cock.[3]
Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,

[1] *In sea or fire, &c.*] The Platonists supposed there were spirits proper to each of the four elements. Milton speaks of 'demonian spirits' as 'powers of fire, air, water, and earth beneath,' Par. Reg. ii. 122; and 'of those demons that are found in fire, air, flood, or under ground.' (Il Pens. 93.)

[2] *Extravagant and erring.*] Out of its proper element and wandering about.

[3] *It faded, &c.*] Sandys, in his commentary on Ovid's Met. xv., says: 'Ghosts, or rather devils, assume an airy, thin, and therefore fluxative body, which by heat is extenuated, and consequently dissipated, but condensed and confirmed by cold, insomuch as not to be seen by the heatful light of the day; whereupon grew that opinion, how ghosts and other apparitions of terror did wander only in the night, and vanished with the dawning. So the ghost of Anchises before the rising of the sun was forced to part with Æneas.' When Hamlet comes on the platform he refers to the intensity of the cold, i. 4.

The bird of dawning singeth all night long:
And then, they say, no spirit can walk abroad;
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,[1]
So hallowed and so gracious is the time.

Hor. So have I heard, and do in part believe it.
But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill:
Break we our watch up; and, by my advice,
Let us impart what we have seen to-night
Unto young Hamlet: for, upon my life,
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him;
Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,
As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?

Mar. Let 's do 't, I pray: and I this morning know
Where we shall find him most conveniently. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *The same. A Room of State in the same.*

Enter the KING, QUEEN, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES, VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, Lords *and* Attendants.

King. Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green; and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe;
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature,
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,
Together with remembrance of ourselves.

[1] *Takes.*] Smites with infection or infirmity. So in The Merry Wives, iv. 4, 'And there he blasts the tree, and takes the cattle.' So also in K. Lear, 'Strike her young bones, ye taking airs, with lameness,' ii. 4. 'Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting, and taking,' iii. 4.

Therefore our sometime sister,[1] now our queen,
The imperial jointress of this warlike state,
Have we, as 't were, with a defeated joy—
With one auspicious and one dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral, and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole—
Taken to wife: nor have we herein barred
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along:—For all, our thanks.
Now follows, that you know, young Fortinbras,
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,
Or thinking, by our late dear brother's death,
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,
Colleagued with the dream of his advantage,
He hath not failed to pester us with message,
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,
To our most valiant brother.—So much for him.
Now for ourself, and for this time of meeting.
Thus much the business is: We have here writ
To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras,
Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears
Of this his nephew's purpose, to suppress
His further gait[2] herein; in that the levies,
The lists, and full proportions, are all made
Out of his subject: and we here despatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,
For bearing of this greeting to old Norway;
Giving to you no further personal power
To business with the king, more than the scope

[1] *Our sometime sister.*] Her who formerly was our sister-in-law. So in K. Richard II., i. 2, 'Thy sometime brother's wife.'

[2] *Gait.*] Proceeding.

Of these dilated articles allow.
Farewell; and let your haste commend your duty.
Cor., Vol. In that and all things will we show our duty.
King. We doubt it nothing; heartily farewell.
[*Exeunt* VOL. *and* COR.
And now, Laertes, what 's the news with you?
You told us of some suit: What is 't, Laertes?
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane,
And lose your voice: What wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?
The head is not more native to the heart,[1]
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father,
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?
Laer. Dread my lord,[2]
Your leave and favour to return to France;
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,
To show my duty in your coronation,
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again towards France,
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.[3]
King. Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?
Pol. He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave,
By laboursome petition; and, at last,

[1] *Native.*] Vitally, or essentially related. Claudius here, no doubt, refers to his having been elected king mainly through the help of Polonius.

[2] *Dread my lord.*] In such expressions as 'good my lord,' 'good my brother,' 'dear my liege,' &c., where a comma does not follow the adjective (*See* Note 1, p. 46), the pronoun and noun must be regarded in combination, as the title qualified by the adjective. In Love's Lab. Lost, i. 2, we find 'sweet my-child.'

[3] *Bow them to.*] Humbly solicit.

Upon his will I sealed my hard consent:
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

King. Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine,[1]
And thy best graces spend it at thy will!—
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son,—

Ham. A little more than kin, and less than kind.[2]
[*Aside.*

King. How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

Ham. Not so, my lord; I am too much i' the sun.[3]

Queen. Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not for ever with thy vailed[4] lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust:

[1] *Take thy fair hour, &c.*] Take your own convenient hour for departure; let the time of your absence be as long as you please, and be spent at your will in showing forth your best qualities.

[2] *A little more than kin, &c.*] There is here, perhaps, a play on words, *more than kin* being more than three letters, and *less than kind* less than four. But, mainly, the young prince means that he is something between *cousin* (collateral relation) and *son*—the titles which Claudius has just used. He is Claudius's stepson, as well as nephew, therefore a little more than kin, but less than his son by kind, that is, by nature. The king and queen were, as he afterwards calls them (ii. 2), his 'uncle-father and aunt-mother.' In K. Richard II. iv. 1, we have, 'Tumultuous wars shall kin with kin and kind with kind confound;' and in Sackville's Ferrex and Porrex, i. 1, 'In kind a father, not in kindliness.'

Kind is *nature*. Hence *kindless* (Hamlet, ii. 2), unnatural; *kindly*, natural. 'The kindly fruits of the earth,' Eng. Liturgy; 'My age is as a lusty winter, frosty, but kindly,' As You Like It, ii. 3; 'The earth shall sooner leave her kindly skill to bring forth fruits,' Spenser, F. Queen, I. iii. 28.

[3] *I am too much i' the sun.*] Hamlet meant that the court at which he lived was not overshadowed with gloom, but pervaded by too much of the sunshine of jollity, considering the recent death of his father.

[4] *Vailed.*] Drooping. To *vail* is to lower: Fr. *avaler*.

Thou know'st 't is common—all that lives must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

Ham. Ay, madam, it is common.

Queen. If it be,
Why seems it so particular with thee?

Ham. *Seems*, madam! nay, it is; I know not *seems*.
'T is not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, modes, shows of grief,
That can denote me truly: These, indeed, seem,
For they are actions that a man might play:
But I have that within which passeth show;
These, but the trappings and the suits of woe.

King. 'T is sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father:
But, you must know, your father lost a father;
That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound[1]
In filial obligation for some term
To do obsequious[2] sorrow: But to persever[3]
In obstinate condolement, is a course
Of impious stubbornness; 't is unmanly grief:
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven;
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,

[1] *The survivor bound.*] Bound the survivor.

[2] *Obsequious.*] Funereal; pertaining to funeral obsequies.

[3] *Persever.*] So the word was formerly spelt and accented. 'Ay, and perversely she persevers so,' Two Gent. of Verona, iii. 2. 'Persever in it,' Massinger's Virgin Martyr, i. 1, and Maid of Honour, v. 2. *See* also Spenser, F. Queen, III. vii. 2, and IV. x. 11.

An understanding simple and unschooled:
For what we know must be, and is as common
As any the most vulgar thing to sense,
Why should we, in our peevish opposition,
Take it to heart? Fie! 't is a fault to heaven,
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
To reason most absurd; whose common theme
Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,
From the first corse till he that died to-day,
This must be so. We pray you, throw to earth
This unprevailing woe; and think of us
As of a father: for let the world take note,
You are the most immediate to our throne,
And, with no less nobility of love,[1]
Than that which dearest father bears his son,
Do I impart towards you. For your intent
In going back to school in Wittenberg,[2]
It is most retrograde to our desire:
And, we beseech you, bend you to remain
Here, in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

Queen. Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet;
I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.

Ham. I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

King. Why, 't is a loving and a fair reply;
Be as ourself in Denmark.—Madam, come;

[1] *Nobility of love:*] Ennobling love; love that desires to dignify its object.

[2] *Going back to school, &c.*] 'At that great outburst of devotion to letters and philosophy which accompanied the Reformation, and both created, and fostered into almost instant maturity, the universities of Northern Europe (and this very Wittenberg among the rest), it was not only youths who thronged to drink and bathe in the streams of knowledge, but also men of mature age.' Strachey's Analysis of Hamlet.

This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart: in grace whereof,
No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day,
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell;
And the king's rouse[1] the heavens shall bruit again,
Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come away.

[*Exeunt all except* HAMLET.

Ham. O that this too too-solid[2] flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! God! O God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on 't! O fie! 't is an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead!—nay, not so much, not two;
So excellent a king; that was, to this,

[1] *Rouse.*] A bumper: Gifford says 'A *rouse* was a large glass in which a health was given, the drinking of which by the rest of the company formed a *carouse.*' *Note* to Massinger's Duke of Milan.

[2] *Too too-solid:*] Some critics think that our early writers used *too-too* as a compound, to signify *exceeding.* We believe, however, that the second *too* with the word following formed a compound collectively modified by the first *too.* In this play, iv. 7, we have 'dies in his own too-much;' in Beaumont and Fletcher's King and no King, iv. 2, 'add more restraint to that too-much you have;' and in Chapman's All Fools, i., 'much too-much indulgent:' We apprehend, therefore, that the syntax of such phrases as 'too too solid' is analogous to that of 'well welcome,' in the Comedy of Errors, ii. 2, and that it is properly indicated by our use of the hyphen in the following examples:—'too too-hard,' Spenser's F. Queen, III. iv. 26; 'too too-true,' Fuller's Holy State, i. 2; too too-courteous, Fletcher's Women Pleased, iv. 3; too too-much,' Two Gent. of Verona, ii. 4; 'too too-strongly,' Merry Wives, ii. 2.

Hyperion[1] to a satyr: so loving to my mother,
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly.) Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on: and yet, within a month,—
Let me not think on 't—Frailty, thy name is woman!
A little month; or ere those shoes were old,
With which she followed my poor father's body,
Like Niobe,[2] all tears;—why she, even she,—
O heaven! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,[3]
Would have mourned longer,—married with mine uncle,
My father's brother; but no more like my father,
Than I to Hercules: within a month;
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears

[1] *Hyperion.*] This word, which denotes sublimity, was a name given to the father of the Sun, and sometimes to Sol himself or Apollo. It here denotes Apollo, whose golden locks and majestic beauty are so much celebrated in classic poetry. Hamlet afterwards attributes to his father 'Hyperion's curls,' iii. 4.

[2] *Niobe.*] The wife of Amphion, king of Thebes. She was proud of the number of her children, and gloried over Latona, who had only two, Apollo and Diana; but these two, on that account, slew all the offspring of Niobe. Jupiter then changed Niobe into a rock, from which a rivulet, supplied by her tears, continually flowed.

[3] *Discourse of reason.*] Discourse here means the power of arguing or inferring; that discursive faculty which investigates both the past and the future, of which Hamlet afterwards says 'Sure He that made us with such large discourse, looking before and after,' &c. iv. 4. 'An understanding man, and one that can discern between discourse and sophistry.' Chillingworth's Religion of Protestants, Prof. 3: 'What is discourse, but drawing conclusions out of premisses by good consequence.' *Ibid.* 12. 'We through madness frame strange conceits in our discoursing brains.' Ford's Lady's Trial, iii. 3. 'Martin Luther, conducted, no doubt, by a higher providence, but in discourse of reason, finding,' &c. Bacon's Advancement of Learning, Bk. 1. *See* the Editor's *Essays of Bacon*, p. 1, note 5.

Had left the flushing of her galled eyes,[1]
She married :—O most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets;
It is not, nor it cannot come to, good;
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue![2]

Enter HORATIO, BERNARDO, *and* MARCELLUS.

Hor. Hail to your lordship!
Ham. I am glad to see you well:
Horatio,—or I do forget myself.
Hor. The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.
Ham. Sir, my good friend;[3] I'll change that name with you.
And what make you[4] from Wittenberg, Horatio?—
Marcellus?
Mar. My good lord,—
Ham. I am very glad to see you; good even, sir,—
But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?
Hor. A truant disposition, good my lord.
Ham. I would not hear your enemy say so;
Nor shall you do mine ear that violence,

[1] *Left the flushing.*] Ceased to produce flushing. *To leave* very often signified to leave off or cease: 'Leave wringing of your hands;' Hamlet, iii. 4. 'I cannot leave to love.' Two Gent. of Verona, ii. 6; 'I leave to be, if,' &c. *Ibid.* iii. 1.

[2] *Break my heart,* &c.] So in K. Richard II. ii. 1,

'My heart is great; but it must break with silence,
Ere 't be disburdened with a liberal tongue.'

[3] *Sir, my good friend,* &c.] Sir, call yourself rather my good friend; I will exchange the name of friend with you. Compare Note 1, p. 24.

[4] *What make you.*] What do you: a frequent use of the verb *make* in the old dramatists. 'What make these naked weapons here?' B. Jonson's Silent Woman, iv. 7.

To make it truster of your own report
Against yourself: I know you are no truant.
But what is your affair in Elsinore?
We 'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.[1]
Hor. My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.
Ham. I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow-student;
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.
Hor. Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.
Ham. Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral baked meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
Would I had met my dearest[2] foe in heaven
Ere I had seen that day, Horatio!—
My father,—methinks, I see my father.
Hor. O, where, my lord?
Ham. In my mind's eye, Horatio.
Hor. I saw him once; he was a goodly king.
Ham. He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.
Hor. My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.
Ham. Saw! who?
Hor. My lord, the king your father.
Ham. The king my father!
Hor. Season your admiration for a while[3]
With an attent ear; till I may deliver,
Upon the witness of these gentlemen,
This marvel to you.
Ham. For heaven's love, let me hear.

[1] *To drink deep.*] Hamlet means jestingly to intimate that Horatio, having come amongst a people addicted to drinking, is in danger of learning the habit. He afterwards remarks that the Danes were noted in this way, i. 4.

[2] *Dearest.*] Chief. In 1 K. Henry IV. iii. 2, the king calls his son his 'nearest and dearest enemy.'

[3] *Season your admiration.*] Control or temper your wonder. To *admire* formerly meant to *wonder at.*

Hor. Two nights together had these gentlemen,
Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch,
In the dead waste[1] and middle of the night,
Been thus encountered:—A figure like your father,
Armed to point, exactly,[2] *cap-à-pé*,
Appears before them, and with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by them: thrice he walked,
By their oppressed and fear-surprised eyes,
Within his truncheon's length; whilst they, distilled
Almost to jelly with the act of fear,[3]
Stand dumb, and speak not to him. This to me
In dreadful secrecy impart they did;
And I with them the third night kept the watch:
Where, as they had delivered, both in time,
Form of the thing, each word made true and good,
The apparition comes: I knew your father:
These hands are not more like.

Ham. But where was this?

Mar. My lord, upon the platform where we watched.

Ham. Did you not speak to it?

Hor. My lord, I did;
But answer made it none: yet once methought
It lifted up its head, and did address

[1] *Waste.*] Solitude, deserted time. A *vast*, or *waste*, more frequently a vastness or wastness (from the Lat. *vastus*), meant a wilderness or desert space. 'Their excursions into the limits of physical causes hath bred a vastness and solitude in that track.' Bacon's Adv. of Learning, Bk. II. 'Through woods and wastness wide him daily sought.' Spenser's F. Queen, I. iii. 3.

[2] *Armed to point.*] The expression *to point*, Fr. *de point en point*, means *exactly*. The more common phrase was *at all points*, which is here the reading of the folio edition. 'The doughty challenger came forth, all armed to point.' Spenser's F. Queen, IV. iii. 6. 'Forth came Artegall,—all armed to point.' *Ibid.* V. v. 5.

[3] *With the act.*] Through the action or influence.

Itself to motion, like as it would speak:
But, even then, the morning cock crew loud;
And at the sound it shrunk in haste away,
And vanished from our sight.

Ham. 'T is very strange.

Hor. As I do live, my honoured lord, 't is true;
And we did think it writ down in our duty,
To let you know of it.

Ham. Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me—
Hold you the watch to-night?

All. We do, my lord.

Ham. Armed, say you?

All. Armed, my lord.

Ham. From top to toe?

All. My lord, from head to foot.

Ham. Then saw you not his face?

Hor. O, yes, my lord;
He wore his beaver up.

Ham. What, looked he frowningly?

Hor. A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

Ham. Pale, or red?

Hor. Nay, very pale.

Ham. And fixed his eyes upon you?

Hor. Most constantly.

Ham. I would I had been there.

Hor. It would have much amazed you.

Ham. Very like, very like: staid it long?

Hor. While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

Mar., Ber. Longer, longer.

Hor. Not when I saw it.

Ham. His beard was grizzled? no?

Hor. It was as I have seen it in his life—
A sable silvered.

Ham. I will watch to-night;
Perchance 't will walk again.
Hor. I warrant it will.
Ham. If it assume my noble father's person,
I 'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape,
And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,
If you have hitherto concealed this sight,
Let it be tenable in your silence still;
And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,
Give it an understanding, but no tongue;
I will requite your loves. So, fare ye well:
Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,
I 'll visit you.
All. Our duty to your honour.
Ham. Your love,[1] as mine to you: Farewell.
[*Exeunt* HOR., MAR., *and* BER.
My father's spirit in arms! all is not well;
I doubt some foul play: would the night were come!
Till then sit still, my soul. Foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.
[*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*A Room in* Polonius' *House.*

Enter LAERTES *and* OPHELIA.

Laer. My necessaries are embarked; farewell;
And, sister, as the winds give benefit,
And convoy is assistant, do not sleep,
But let me hear from you.
Oph. 'Do you doubt that?
Laer. For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favours,

[1] *Your love.*] Say rather your love. Compare Note 3, p. 20.

Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood;
A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute;
No more.

Oph. No more but so?

Laer. Think it no more:
For nature crescent does not grow alone
In thews,[1] and bulk; but, as this temple waxes,
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal. Perhaps he loves you now;
And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch[2]
The virtue of his will; but you must fear,
His greatness weighed, his will is not his own;
For he himself is subject to his birth:
He may not, as unvalued persons do,
Carve for himself; for on his choice depends
The safety and the health of the whole state;
And therefore must his choice be circumscribed
Unto the voice and yielding of that body
Whereof he is the head: Then if he says he loves you,
It fits your wisdom so far to believe it,
As he in his peculiar act and place
May give his saying deed; which is no further

[1] *Thews.*] Sinews, muscles. 'Care I for the limbs, the thews, the stature,' &c. 2 K. Henry IV. iii. 2. 'Romans now have thews and limbs like to their ancestors.' Jul. Cæsar, i. 3. The word more frequently used to denote manners, virtues, or moral principles. 'If so were that she had mo goode thews than her vices bad.' Chaucer's Merchant's Tale. 'Three daughters well upbrought in goodly thews.' Spenser's F. Queen, I. x. 4.

[2] *No soil, &c.*] No foulness or cunning stains the honesty of his intentions. A *cautel* is a crafty trick. To *smirch*, or *besmirch*, is to defile or stain. 'The chaste unsmirched brow of my true mother.' Hamlet, iv. 5.

Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.
Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain,
If with too credent ear you list his songs;
Or lose your heart; or your chaste treasure open
To his unmastered importunity.
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister;
And keep within the rear of your affection,
Out of the shot and danger of desire.
The chariest maid is prodigal enough,
If she unmask her beauty to the moon:
Virtue itself scapes not calumnious strokes:
The canker galls the infants of the spring,
Too oft before their buttons be disclosed;
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.[1]
Be wary then; best safety lies in fear;
Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

Oph. I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,
As watchman to my heart: But, good my brother,
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven;
Whilst, like a puffed and reckless libertine,
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
And recks not his own rede.[2]

Laer. O fear me not.
I stay too long;—but here my father comes.—

Enter POLONIUS.

A double blessing is a double grace,
Occasion smiles upon a second leave.

[1] *Contagious blastments, &c.*] 'Contagious fevers are certainly contracted with greater facility in youth, than either in infancy or in age.' Bucknill's Medical Knowl. of Shaksp.

[2] *Recks not, &c.*] Heeds not his own counsel.

Pol. Yet here, Laertes! aboard, aboard, for shame;
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are staid for. There—my blessing with you!
[*Laying his hand on* LAERTES' *head.*
And these few precepts in thy memory
See thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel; but, being in,
Bear 't that the opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice:
Take each man's censure,[1] but reserve thy judgment.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not expressed in fancy; rich, not gaudy:
For the apparel oft proclaims the man;
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are most select and generous[2] chief in that.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be:
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all,—To thine ownself be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell; my blessing season this in thee!
Laer. Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.
Pol. The time invites you; go, your servants tend.
Laer. Farewell, Ophelia; and remember well
What I have said to you.

[1] *Censure.*] Opinion, judgment.
[2] *Generous.*] Noble; gentlemanly.

Oph. 'T is in my memory locked,[1]
And you yourself shall keep the key of it.
Laer. Farewell. [*Exit* LAERTES.
Pol. What is 't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?
Oph. So please you, something touching the lord Hamlet.
Pol. Marry, well bethought:
'T is told me, he hath very oft of late
Given private time to you, and you yourself
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous:
If it be so, (as so 't is put on me,
And that in way of caution,) I must tell you,
You do not understand yourself so clearly,
As it behoves my daughter and your honour:
What is between you? give me up the truth.
Oph. He hath, my lord, of late, made many tenders
Of his affection to me.
Pol. Affection? puh! you speak like a green girl,
Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.
Do you believe his *tenders*, as you call them?
Oph. I do not know, my lord, what I should think.
Pol. Marry, I 'll teach you: think yourself a baby;
That you have ta'en his tenders for true pay,
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly;
Or (not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,
Running it thus), you 'll tender me a fool.[2]
Oph. My lord, he hath importuned me with love,
In honourable fashion.
Pol. Ay, *fashion* you may call it; go to, go to.
Oph. And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord,
With all the vows of heaven.

[1] *'T is in my memory*, &c.] Similarly in Massinger's Great Duke of Florence, iii. 1. 'What you deliver to me shall be locked up in a strong cabinet, of which you yourself shall keep the key.'

[2] *A fool.*] This is intended to describe Ophelia.

Pol. Ay, springes to catch woodcocks.[1] I do know,
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
Gives the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter,
Giving more light than heat—extinct in both,
Even in their promise as it is a making,—
You must not take for fire. From this time, daughter,
Be somewhat scanter of your maiden presence;
Set your entreatments at a higher rate,
Than a command to parley. For lord Hamlet,
Believe so much in him, that he is young;
And with a larger tether may he walk,
Than may be given you: In few,[2] Ophelia,
Do not believe his vows; for they are brokers;[3]
Not of that dye which their investments show,
But mere implorators of unholy suits,
Breathing like sanctified and pious bonds,
The better to beguile. This is for all,—
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth,
Have you so slander any moment's leisure,
As to give words or talk with the lord Hamlet.
Look to 't, I charge you: come your ways.[4]

Oph. I shall obey, my lord. [*Exeunt.*

[1] *Springes, &c.*] A woodcock was supposed to have no brains, and hence became a name for a simpleton. 'A headpiece—of woodcock without brains in it.' Ford's Lover's Melancholy, ii. 1. 'Here's the springe I have set to catch this woodcock in.' Middleton's Roaring Girl.

[2] *In few.*] In few words, in brief. 'In few, they hurried us aboard a bark.' Tempest, i. 2. 'But to the cause I hang upon, which, in few, is my honour.' Beaumont and Fletcher's King and no King, iv. 3.

[3] *Brokers.*] Procurers, and not wearing their true colour. *See* Note in Preface, p. vii.

[4] *Come your ways.*] The expression is still common in the North. 'Come a little nearer this ways.' Merry Wives, ii. 2. 'Go thy

SCENE IV.—*The Platform.*

Enter HAMLET, HORATIO, *and* MARCELLUS.

Ham. The air bites shrewdly: It is very cold.[1]
Hor. It is a nipping and an eager air.
Ham. What hour now?
Hor. I think it lacks of twelve.
Mar. No, it is struck.
Hor. Indeed? I heard it not; then it draws near the season,
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.
[*A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off, within.*
What does this mean, my lord?
Ham. The king doth wake to-night, and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swaggering up-spring reels;[2]
And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge.
Hor. Is it a custom?
Ham. Ay, marry, is 't:
And to my mind, though I am native here,
And to the manner born, it is a custom
More honoured in the breach than the observance.
This heavy-headed revel, east and west,

ways.' *Ibid.* 'Come thy ways, we'll go along together.' As You Like It, ii. 3. The phrase is an abbreviation for 'Come on your ways.' Tempest, ii. 2.

[1] *It is very cold.*] *See* Note 3, p. 11.

[2] *Keeps wassail, &c.*] Holds a revel, and reels through the swaggering dance. The noise of trumpets and ordnance had interrupted conversation about the Ghost, and suggested to Hamlet a subject on which he expatiates in order to beguile his anxiety.

Makes us traduced and taxed of other nations;
They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition;[1] and, indeed, it takes
From our achievements, though performed at height,
The pith and marrow of our attribute.
So, oft it chances in particular men,
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As, in their birth, (wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot choose his origin,)
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,[2]
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason;
Or by some habit, that too much o'er-leavens
The form of plausive manners;—that these men,
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being nature's livery, or fortune's star,
Their virtues else (be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo,)
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault: The dram of vile
Doth all the noble substance of a doubt,[3]
To his own scandal—

[1] *Soil our addition.*] Sully our title by likening us to swine. The Danes and Hollanders were notorious for drinking; but in Othello, ii. 3, Iago says of the English, 'He drinks you with facility your Dane dead drunk,' &c.

[2] *The o'ergrowth, &c.*] The excess of some of the four humours —blood, phlegm, choler, melancholy.

> 'What war so cruel, or what siege so sore,
> As that which strong affections do apply
> Against the fort of reason evermore?'
>
> Spenser's F. Queen, II. xi. 1.

[3] *Of a doubt, &c.*] There is here a corruption, of which various emendations have been proposed. We might suggest to substitute *oft indict*, that is, cause to be indicted to the charge of its own vileness; or, *oft condemn:* but it is possible that Hamlet had not finished his

Enter GHOST.

Hor. Look, my lord, it comes!

Ham. Angels and ministers of grace defend us!—
Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damned,
Bring with thee airs from heaven, or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked, or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape,
That I will speak to thee; I 'll call thee Hamlet,
King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me:
Let me not burst in ignorance! but tell,
Why thy canonized[1] bones, hearsed in death,
Have burst their cerements! why the sepulchre,
Wherein we saw thee quietly in-urned,
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws,
To cast thee up again! What may this mean,
That thou, dead corse, again in cómplete steel,
Revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,
Making night hideous; and we fools of nature[2]
So horridly to shake our disposition,[3]
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?
Say, why is this? wherefore? what should we do?

sentence when Horatio interrupted him, and that some verb being supplied after the word *scandal* would make it easier to rectify the preceding line. We have assumed *dram of vile* to be the likeliest expression that could have been corrupted into the common reading *dram of eale*. Compare 1 K. Henry IV. iii. 1, where Worcester, after enumerating several faults in manners, says—

> 'The least of which, haunting a nobleman,
> Loseth men's hearts, and leaves behind a stain
> Upon the beauty of all parts besides,
> Beguiling them of commendation.'

[1] *Canonized.*] Consecrated by canonical rites.

[2] *Fools of Nature.*] In nature's ignorance, incapable of knowing the supernatural mysteries of the other world.

[3] *Disposition.*] Frame, or constitution.

Hor. It beckons you to go away with it,
As if it some impartment did desire
To you alone.
Mar. Look, with what courteous action
It wafts you to a more removed ground;[1]
But do not go with it.
Hor. No, by no means.
Ham. It will not speak; then will I follow it.
Hor. Do not, my lord.
Ham. Why, what should be the fear?
I do not set my life at a pin's fee;
And for my soul, what can it do to that,
Being a thing immortal as itself?
It waves me forth again;—I'll follow it.
Hor. What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff,
That beetles o'er his base into the sea?
And there assume some other horrible form,
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason,[2]
And draw you into madness? think of it:
The very place puts toys of desperation,
Without more motive, into every brain,
That looks so many fathoms to the sea,
And hears it roar beneath.
Ham. It wafts me still:—
Go on, I'll follow thee.
Mar. You shall not go, my lord.

[1] *Removed.*] Remote, retired. So in As You Like It,—'In so removed a dwelling;' and in Milton's Il Penseroso, 78,—'Some still removed place will fit.'

[2] *Deprive your sovereignty of reason.*] Take away from you the sovereign power of reason; dethrone your reason. So Sandys, in his commentary on Ovid, Met. xiv., refers to 'headstrong appetites which revolt from the sovereignty of reason.'

Ham. Hold off your hand.
Hor. Be ruled; you shall not go.
Ham. My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body[1]
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.—
[GHOST *beckons.*
Still am I called;—unhand me, gentlemen;
[*Breaking from them.*
By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me:[2]—
I say, away!—Go on, I'll follow thee.
[*Exeunt* GHOST *and* HAMLET.
Hor. He waxes desperate with imagination.
Mar. Let's follow; 't is not fit thus to obey him.
Hor. Have after:—To what issue will this come?
Mar. Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.
Hor. Heaven will direct it.
Mar. Nay, let's follow him. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.—*A more remote Part of the Platform.*

Re-enter GHOST *and* HAMLET.

Ham. Where wilt thou lead me? speak, I'll go no further.
Ghost. Mark me.
Ham. I will.
Ghost. My hour is almost come,

[1] *Artery.*] 'Shakspeare entertained the medical opinion of his day, that the arteries were used for the transmission of the vital spirits.' Dr. Bucknill. 'Nature, in the framing of our bodies, did not show more wonderful providence in disposing veins and arteries throughout the body, for their apt conveyance of the blood and spirit from the liver and heart to each part thereof.' Botero's Relations of the World, ii.

[2] *Lets me.*] Hinders me.

When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.

Ham. Alas, poor ghost!

Ghost. Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold.

Ham. Speak, I am bound to hear.

Ghost. So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

Ham. What!

Ghost. I am thy father's spirit;
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul; freeze thy young blood;
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres;
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand an end,
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine;
But this eternal blazon must not be[1]
To ears of flesh and blood:—List, Hamlet, O list!—
If thou didst ever thy dear father love,—

Ham. O heaven!

Ghost. Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

Ham. *Murder?*

Ghost. Murder most foul, as in the best it is:
But this—most foul, strange, and unnatural.

Ham. Haste me to know it; that I, with wings as swift
As meditation or the thoughts of love,
May sweep to my revenge.

Ghost. I find thee apt;

[1] *Eternal blazon.*] Exposure of secrets of the eternal world.

And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed
That rots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,
Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now Hamlet, hear:
'T is given out that, sleeping in mine orchard,
A serpent stung me; so the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a forged process of my death
Rankly abused: but know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life,
Now wears his crown.

Ham. O my prophetic soul![1] mine uncle?

Ghost. Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,
(O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
So to seduce!) won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen;[2]
O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there!
From me, whose love was of that dignity,
That it went hand in hand even with the vow
I made to her in marriage; and to decline
Upon a wretch, whose natural gifts were poor
To those of mine!
But virtue, as it never will be moved,
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,—
So lust, though to a radiant angel linked,
Will sate itself in a celestial bed,
And prey on garbage.

But soft! methinks, I scent the morning air;
Brief let me be:—Sleeping within mine orchard,—
My custom always in the afternoon,—

[1] *My prophetic soul.*] This refers to Hamlet's previous suspicion expressed in the words, 'All is not well, I doubt some foul play,' &c.

[2] *Seeming-virtuous.*] Spenser, in F. Queen, I. ii. 27, has 'the seeming-simple maid.'

Upon my secure[1] hour thy uncle stole,
With juice of cursed hebenon[2] in a vial,
And in the porches of mine ears did pour
The leperous distilment; whose effect
Holds such an enmity with blood of man,
That, swift as quicksilver, it courses through
The natural gates and alleys of the body;
And, with a sudden vigour, it doth posset
And curd, like eager[3] droppings into milk,
The thin and wholesome blood: so did it mine;
And a most instant tetter[4] barked about,
Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust,
All my smooth body.
Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand,
Of life, of crown, of queen, at once despatched;[5]
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhouseled,[6] disappointed, unaneled;

[1] *Secure.*] Unguarded. The word literally means *care apart*, or *apart from care*, and formerly often denoted careless, heedless. 'Man may *securely* sin, but *safely* never.' B. Jonson's Forest, xi. *See*, in Scripture, Judg. xviii. 7, 10.

[2] *Hebenon.*] No natural substance could produce the effects here ascribed to *hebenon*. The word seems to be a result of the confusion of the two words *henbane* and *hebon*. In Marlowe's Jew of Malta, iii., there is mention made of 'the juice of hebon,' that is, ebony, which was anciently believed to be poisonous; and perhaps Shakspeare wrote *hebon*: but, probably, we cannot do better than to accept *hebenon* as a generic name for poison, and the epithet *cursed*, as implying that the poison was endowed with its deadly potency by magic: at least, such is the 'mixture rank of midnight weeds collected with Hecate's ban thrice blasted,' which is represented as made use of in the play scene.

[3] *Eager.*] Fr. *aigre*, sour.

[4] *Tetter.*] Eruption like ringworm.

[5] *Despatched.*] Stripped, bereft.

[6] *Unhouseled, &c.*] *Unhouseled* is without the eucharist; *dis-*

No reckoning made, but sent to my account
With all my imperfections on my head:
Ham. O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!
Ghost. If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
A couch for luxury and damned incest.
But, howsoever thou pursu'st this act,
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught; leave her to heaven,
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once!
The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,
And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire:
Adieu, adieu, Hamlet! remember me! [*Exit.*
Ham. O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?
And shall I couple hell?—O fie!—Hold, my heart;
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear me stiffly up!—Remember thee?
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe.[1] Remember thee?
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,[2]
That youth and observation copied there;
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmixed with baser matter: yes, by heaven!—
O most pernicious woman!—
O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!—

appointed is out of fitness or readiness; *unaneled* is without extreme unction.

[1] *Globe.*] Skull.

[2] *Pressures.*] Impressions.

My tables, my tables,[1]—meet it is I set it down,
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;
At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark; [*Writing.*
So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word;
It is, *Adieu, adieu! remember me.*

Hor. [*Without.*] My lord, my lord,—
Mar. [*Without.*] Lord Hamlet,—
Hor. [*Without.*] Heaven secure him!
Mar. [*Without.*] So be it!
Hor. [*Without.*] Illo, ho, ho, my lord!
Ham. Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come.[2]

Enter HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS.

Mar. How is 't, my noble lord?
Hor. What news, my lord?
Ham. O, wonderful!
Hor. Good my lord, tell it.
Ham. No; you'll reveal it.
Hor. Not I, my lord, by heaven.
Mar. Nor I, my lord.
Ham. How say you then; would heart of man once think it?—
But you'll be secret?—
Hor., Mar. Ay, by heaven, my lord.
Ham. There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark,—
But he's an arrant knave.

[1] *My tables.*] Our ancestors used memorandum books made of tables of slate or ivory. Hamlet, in his frenzy, regards the smiling villany as something so utterly beyond what he had thought possible, that he must note it in his table-book as a warning to beware of smiles.

[2] *Hillo, ho, ho, boy.*] This is an imitation of the manner in which the falconer used to call down a flying hawk.

Hor. There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave
To tell us this.

Ham. Why, right; you are i' the right:
And so, without more circumstance at all,
I hold it fit that we shake hands and part;
You, as your business and desire shall point you—
For every man has business and desire,
Such as it is,—and for mine own poor part,
Look you, I'll go pray.

Hor. These are but wild and hurling words, my lord.

Ham. I'm sorry they offend you, heartily;
Yes, 'faith, heartily.

Hor. There's no offence, my lord.

Ham. Yes, by St. Patrick, but there is, Horatio.
And much offence too. Touching this vision here,—
It is an honest ghost,[1] that let me tell you;
For your desire to know what is between us,
O'ermaster it[2] as you may. And now, good friends,
As you are friends, scholars, and soldiers,
Give me one poor request.

Hor. What is't, my lord?
We will.

Ham. Never make known what you have seen to-night.

Hor., Mar. My lord, we will not.

Ham. Nay, but swear 't.

Hor. In faith,
My lord, not I.

Mar. Nor I, my lord, in faith.

Ham. Upon my sword!

Mar. We have sworn, my lord, already.

[1] *An honest ghost.*] Really the ghost of the late King. Hamlet, however, says afterwards, 'The spirit that I have seen may be the devil.'

[2] *O'ermaster it.*] Control or suppress that desire.

Ham. In deed,—upon my sword,—in deed.[1]

Ghost. [*Beneath.*] Swear!

Ham. Ah, ha, boy! say'st thou so? art thou there, truepenny?[2]

Come on,—you hear this fellow in the cellarage,—
Consent to swear.

Hor. Propose the oath, my lord.

Ham. Never to speak of this that you have seen—
Swear by my sword.

Ghost. [*Beneath.*] Swear!

Ham. *Hic et ubique?* then we'll shift our ground:—[3]
Come hither, gentlemen,
And lay your hands again upon my sword:
Never to speak of this that you have heard,
Swear by my sword.

Ghost. [*Beneath.*] Swear by his sword!

Ham. Well said, old mole! can'st work i' the ground so fast?
A worthy pioneer!—Once more remove, good friends.

[1] *In deed.*] In act; with proper ceremony. To lay one's hands on a sword, in taking oath, was to swear by the cross, which was figured on the hilt, or of which the hilt and blade themselves were a figure. So in George a Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield, 'And here upon my sword I make protest;' and in K. Richard II. i. 3,

> 'Lay on our royal sword your banished hands;
> Swear by the duty that you owe to God;' &c.

[2] *True-penny.*] A cant name for a genuine honest fellow. The flippancy to which Hamlet here gives way is true to nature; it is a kind of refuge to which terror often rushes for momentary relief; and in the mind of the hearer, who knows its unreality, it only excites the greater awe—'making,' as Campbell says, 'horror more deep by the semblance of mirth.' (Death Boat.)

[3] *Hic et ubique.*] Here and everywhere. Hamlet shifts ground probably on account of the nervous agitation of his friends at hearing the voice from below.

Hor. O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!
Ham. And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Then are dreamt of in our philosophy.
But come;——
Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself,—
As I, perchance, hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on—
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall
With arms encumbered thus, or this head shake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phase,
As, *Well, we know;*—or, *We could, an if we would;*—
Or, *If we list to speak;*—or, *There be, an if they might;*—
Or such ambiguous giving out, to note
That you know aught of me:—This not to do,
So grace and mercy at your most need help you,
Swear!
Ghost. [*Beneath.*] Swear!
Ham. Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!—So, gentlemen,
With all my love I do commend me to you,
And what so poor a man as Hamlet is
May do, to express his love and friending to you,
God willing, shall not lack. Let us go in together;
And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.
The time is out of joint;—O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!—
Nay, come, let's go together. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in* Polonius' *House.*

Enter POLONIUS *and* REYNALDO.

Pol. Give him this money, and these notes, Reynaldo.
Rey. I will, my lord.
Pol. You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,
Before you visit him, to make inquiry
Of his behaviour.
Rey. My lord, I did intend it.
Pol. Marry, well said; very well said. Look you, sir,
Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris;[1]
And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,[2]
What company, at what expense; and finding,
By this encompassment and drift of question,[3]
That they do know my son, come you more nearer
Than your particular demands will touch it:
Take you, as 't were, some distant knowledge of him;
As thus,—*I know his father, and his friends,*
And, in part, him;—Do you mark this, Reynaldo?
Rey. Ay, very well, my lord.

[1] *Danskers.*] Danes. *Dansk* was the ancient name of Denmark. Sir T. Overbury says that the Ingrosser of Corn, hating the Danish stilyard, 'wishes that Danske were at the Moloccos.'

[2] *Where they keep.*] Where they haunt.

[3] *Encompassment and drift.*] Range and scope.

Pol. And, in part, him;—but, you may say, *not well:*
But, if 't be he I mean, he's very wild;
Addicted—so and so; and there put on him
What forgeries you please; marry, none so rank
As may dishonour him; take heed of that;
But, sir, such wanton, wild, and usual slips
As are companions noted and most known
To youth and liberty.

Rey. As gaming, my lord.

Pol. Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling,
Drabbing:—You may go so far.

Rey. My lord, that would dishonour him.

Pol. 'Faith, no; as you may season it in the charge.
You must not put another scandal on him,
That he is open to incontinency;
That's not my meaning: but breathe his faults so quaintly,
That they may seem the taints of liberty:
The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind;
A savageness in unreclaimed blood,
Of general assault.[1]

Rey. But, my good lord,—

Pol. Wherefore should you do this?[2]

Rey. Ay, my lord,
I would know that.

Pol. Marry, sir, here's my drift;
And, I believe, it is a fetch of warrant:[3]
You laying these slight sullies on my son,
As 't were a thing a little soiled i' the working,[4]

[1] *Of general assault.*] That generally besets youth.

[2] *Wherefore, &c.*] Would you know wherefore you should, &c.

[3] *A fetch of warrant.*] An approved artifice. 'All the fetches of art and sophistry.' Chillingworth's Religion of Protestants. (Dedic.)

[4] *I' the working.*] In the making.

Mark you,
Your party in converse, him you would sound,
Having ever[1] seen in the prenominate crimes
The youth you breathe of guilty, be assured
He closes with you in this consequence,—
Good sir, or so; or, *friend*, or *gentleman*,—
According to the phrase or the addition,
Of man, and country.

Rey. Very good, my lord.

Pol. And then, sir, does he this,—he does—
What was I about to say?
I was about to say something:—where did I leave?

Rey. At 'closes in the consequence.'
At 'friend, or so, and gentleman.'

Pol. At 'closes in the consequence'?—Ay, marry;
He closes with you thus:—*I know the gentleman;*
I saw him yesterday, or *t' other day*,
Or then, or then; *with* such and such; *and, as you say,*
There was he gaming; there o'ertook in 's rouse:
There falling out at tennis; or perchance,
I saw him enter such a *house of sale*
(Videlicet, a brothel,) or so forth.—
See you now;
Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth:
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
With windlaces, and with assays of bias,[2]
By indirections find directions out;
So, by my former lecture and advice,
Shall you my son: You have me, have you not?

Rey. My lord, I have.

[1] *Having ever.*] If he has at any time.

[2] *Assays of bias.*] Experiments out of the direct course. A bias is a weight on one side of a ball causing it to turn from a straight course.

Pol. God be wi' you; fare you well.
Rey. Good, my lord.[1]
Pol. Observe his inclination in yourself.[2]
Rey. I shall, my lord.
Pol. And let him ply his music.[3]
Rey. Well, my lord. [*Exit.*

Enter OPHELIA.

Pol. Farewell! — How now, Ophelia? what 's the matter?
Oph. Alas, my lord, I have been so affrighted!
Pol. With what, i' the name of heaven?
Oph. My lord, as I was sewing in my chamber,
Lord Hamlet,—with his doublet all unbraced;
No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled,
Ungartered, and down-gyved to his ancle:[4]
Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;
And with a look so piteous in purport,
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors,—he comes before me.
Pol. Mad for thy love!
Oph. My lord, I do not know;
But, truly, I do fear it.
Pol. What said he?
Oph. He took me by the wrist, and held me hard;
Then goes he to the length of all his arm;
And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face,

[1] *Good, my lord.*] *Good* is here interjectional. *See* note 2, p. 14.
[2] *In yourself.*] Without any remarks or questions to him about it.
[3] *Ply his music.*] Have his free scope.
[4] *Down-gyved.*] Turned down and gathered round his ancles like shackle rings. *Gyves* are fetters.

As he would draw it. Long staid he so;
At last,—a little shaking of mine arm,
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,—
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound,
That it did seem to shatter all his bulk,
And end his being: That done, he lets me go:
And, with his head over his shoulder turned,
He seemed to find his way without his eyes;
For out o' doors he went without their help,
And, to the last, bended their light on me.

Pol. Come, go with me; I will go seek the king.
This is the very ecstasy of love;[1]
Whose violent property fordoes itself,[2]
And leads the will to desperate undertakings,
As oft as any passion under heaven
That does afflict our natures. I am sorry,—
What, have you given him any hard words of late?

Oph. No, my good lord; but, as you did command,
I did repel his letters, and denied
His access to me.

Pol. That hath made him mad.
I am sorry that with better heed and judgment
I had not quoted him:[3] I feared he did but trifle,
And meant to wreck thee; but, beshrew my jealousy!
It seems it is as proper to our age
To cast beyond ourselves[4] in our opinions,
As it is common for the younger sort
To lack discretion. Come, go we to the king:

[1] *Ecstasy.*] Madness.
[2] *Fordoes.*] Undoes, destroys.
[3] *Quoted him.*] Reckoned, estimated, or noted him.
[4] *To cast beyond ourselves.*] To conjecture farther than our reason warrants.

This must be known; which, being kept close, might move
More grief to hide than hate to utter love.[1] [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Room in the Castle.*

Enter KING, QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and* Attendants.

King. Welcome, dear Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern!
Moreover that we much did long to see you,
The need we have to use you did provoke
Our hasty sending. Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation; so I call it,
Since not the exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was: What it should be,
More than his father's death, that thus hath put him
So much from the understanding of himself,
I cannot deem of: I entreat you both,
That, being of so young days brought up with him,
And since so neighboured to his youth and humour,—
That you vouchsafe your rest here in our court
Some little time: so by your companies
To draw him on to pleasure; and to gather,
So much as from occasions you may glean,
Whether aught, to us unknown, afflicts him thus,
That, opened, lies within our remedy.

Queen. Good gentlemen, he hath much talked of you;
And, sure I am, two men there are not living
To whom he more adheres. If it will please you
To show us so much gentry[2] and good will,

[1] *Might move more grief, &c.*] Might occasion more trouble for our having concealed Hamlet's love, than hatred on his part for our having told it.

[2] *Gentry.*] Gentility, courtesy.

As to expend your time with us a while,
For the supply and profit of our hope,[1]
Your visitation shall receive such thanks
As fits a king's remembrance.

Ros. Both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
Put your dread pleasures more into command
Than to entreaty.

Guil. But we both obey;
And here give up ourselves, in the full bent
To lay our service freely at your feet,
To be commanded.

King. Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

Queen. Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz:
And I beseech you instantly to visit
My too much changed son.—Go, some of you,
And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.

Guil. Heavens make our presence, and our practices,
Pleasant and helpful to him!

Queen. Ay, amen!

[*Exeunt* Ros., Guil., *and some* Attendants.

Enter Polonius.

Pol. The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,
Are joyfully returned.

King. Thou still[2] hast been the father of good news.

Pol. Have I, my lord? Assure you, my good liege,
I hold my duty, as I hold my soul,
Both to my God, and to my gracious king:
And I do think (or else this brain of mine
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure

[1] *For the supply, &c.*] As the means, and for the furtherance, of what we hope to accomplish.

[2] *Still.*] Always. Formerly the most common meaning of the word.

As it hath used to do) that I have found
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

King. O, speak of that; that I do long to hear.

Pol. Give first admittance to the ambassadors;
My news shall be the fruit[1] to that great feast.

King. Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.
[*Exit* POL.

He tells me, my sweet queen, that he hath found
The head and source of all your son's distemper.

Queen. I doubt it is no other but the main,—
His father's death, and our o'erhasty marriage.

Re-enter POLONIUS, *with* VOLTIMAND *and* CORNELIUS.

King. Well, we shall sift him. Welcome, my good friends!
Say, Voltimand, what from our brother Norway?

Volt. Most fair return of greetings and desires.
Upon our first,[2] he sent out to suppress
His nephew's levies; which to him appeared
To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack;
But, better looked into, he truly found
It was against your highness: Whereat,—grieved
That so his sickness, age, and impotence,
Was falsely borne in hand,[3]—sends out arrests
On Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys;
Receives rebuke from Norway; and, in fine,
Makes vow before his uncle, never more
To give the assay of arms against your majesty.
Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,

[1] *The fruit.*] The dessert.

[2] *Upon our first.*] Upon our first intimation.

[3] *Falsely borne in hand.*] Gulled. To *bear in hand* was to keep in expectation; so in B. Jonson's Widow, ii. 1, 'You have borne me in hand this three months, and now fobbed me;' and in his Volpone, i. 1,

'Still bearing them in hand,
Letting the cherry knock against their lips,
And draw it by their mouths, and back again.'

Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee;
And his commission, to employ those soldiers,
So levied as before, against the Polack;
With an entreaty, herein further shown, [*Gives a paper.*
That it might please you to give quiet pass
Through your dominions for his enterprise,
On such regards of safety and allowance
As therein are set down.

King. It likes us[1] well;
And, at our more considered time, we 'll read,
Answer, and think upon this business.
Mean time, we thank you for your well-took labour:
Go to your rest; at night we 'll feast together:
Most welcome home! [*Exeunt* VOLT. *and* CORN.

Pol. This business is well ended.—
My liege, and madam, to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time.
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief: Your noble son is mad:
Mad call I it: for, to define true madness,
What is 't, but to be nothing else but mad:
But let that go.

Queen. More matter, with less art.

Pol. Madam, I swear, I use no art at all.
That he is mad, 't is true: 't is true 't is pity;
And pity 't is 't is true: a foolish figure;
But farewell it, for I will use no art.
Mad let us grant him, then: and now remains,
That we find out the cause of this effect,—

[1] *It likes us.*] We like it. This inverted phraseology, imitative of the Latin impersonal verb, was common with our early writers.

Or, rather say, the cause of this defect;
For this effect defective comes by cause:
Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.
Perpend.
I have a daughter—have, while she is mine,—
Who, in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this: Now gather, and surmise.

[Reads.]—*To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia—*

That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; *beautified* is a vile phrase; but you shall hear:—Thus:

In her excellent white bosom, these.

Queen. Came this from Hamlet to her?

Pol. Good madam, stay awhile; I will be faithful.

[*Reads.*

Doubt thou the stars are fire;
Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar;
But never doubt I love.

O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers; I have not art to reckon my groans; but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu. Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him, *HAMLET.*

This, in obedience, hath my daughter showed me:
And, more above, hath his solicitings,
As they fell out by time, by means, and place,
All given to mine ear.

King. But how hath she
Received his love?

Pol. What do you think of me?

King. As of a man faithful and honourable.

Pol. I would fain prove so. But what might you think,
When I had seen this hot love on the wing,
(As I perceived it, I must tell you that,

Before my daughter told me,) what might you,
Or my dear majesty your queen here, think,
If I had played the desk, or table-book;
Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb;
Or looked upon this love with idle sight;—
What might you think? no, I went round[1] to work,
And my young mistress thus I did bespeak;
Lord Hamlet is a prince out of thy star;[2]
This must not be: and then I precepts gave her,
That she should lock herself from his resort,
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice;
And he, repulsed, (a short tale to make,)
Fell into a sadness; then into a fast;[3]
Thence to a watch; thence into a weakness;
Thence to a lightness; and, by this declension,
Into the madness whereon now he raves,
And all we wail for.

King. Do you think 't is this?

Queen. It may be very likely.

[1] *Round.*] Definitely and plainly.

[2] *Out of thy star.*] Out of thy lot.

[3] *Fell into a sadness, &c.*] 'The manner,' says Dr. Bucknill, 'in which Polonius here traces the effect of Hamlet's supposed disappointment in love, represents a physiological chain of events which can often be observed in the development of insanity from a moral cause.' Med. Knowl. of Shaksp. 'We recognise,' says Dr. Connolly, 'all the phenomena of an attack of mental disorder consequent on a sudden and sorrowful shock: first, the loss of all habitual interest in surrounding things; then, indifference to food, incapacity for customary and natural sleep; and then, a weaker stage of fitful tears and levity, the mirth so strangely mixed with "extremest grief;" and then, subsidence into a chronic state in which the faculties are generally deranged. These are occurrences often noticed in pathological experience, and even in the sequence mentioned.' A Study of Hamlet, p. 77.

Pol. Hath there been such a time, (I 'd fain know that,)
That I have positively said, *'T is so,*
When it proved otherwise?
King. Not that I know.
Pol. Take this from this, if this be otherwise:
[*Pointing to his head and shoulder.*
If circumstances lead me, I will find
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre.
King. How may we try it further?
Pol. You know, sometimes he walks four hours together,
Here in the lobby.
Queen. So he does, indeed.
Pol. At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him:
Be you and I behind an arras then;[1]
Mark the encounter: if he love her not,
And be not from his reason fallen thereon,
Let me be no assistant for a state,
And keep a farm and carters.
King. We will try it.

Enter HAMLET, *reading.*

Queen. But, look, where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.
Pol. Away, I do beseech you, both away!
I 'll board him presently:—O, give me leave.—
[*Exeunt* KING, QUEEN, *and* Attendants.
How does my good lord Hamlet?
Ham. Well, God-'a-mercy.
Pol. Do you know me, my lord?

[1] *Behind an arras.*] So in Merry Wives, iii. 3, 'I will ensconce me behind the arras;' and in 1 K. Henry IV. ii. 4, 'Go, hide thee behind the arras.' The tapestry hangings, with which rooms were sometimes adorned, had a considerable space between them and the wall, to prevent their being injured by damp.

Ham. Excellent well; you are a fishmonger.[1]

Pol. Not I, my lord.

Ham. Then I would you were so honest a man.

Pol. Honest, my lord?

Ham. Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

Pol. That 's very true, my lord.

Ham. [Reads.] *For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing carrion,*—Have you a daughter?

Pol. I have, my lord.

Ham. Let her not walk i' the sun: conception is a blessing; but not as your daughter may conceive,—friend, look to 't.

Pol. How say you by that? [*Aside.*] Still harping on my daughter;—yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger: He is far gone, far gone: and, truly, in my youth I suffered much extremity for love; very near this. I 'll speak to him again.—What do you read, my lord?

Ham. Words, words, words!

Pol. What is the matter, my lord?

Ham. Between who?

Pol. I mean the matter that you read, my lord.

Ham. Slanders, sir; for the satirical rogue says here, that old men have grey beards; that their faces are wrinkled; their eyes purging thick amber, and plum-tree gum; and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with weak hams: All of which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down; for you yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if, like a crab, you could go backward.

[1] *A fishmonger.*] The word here means a fisherman as well as a seller of fish, one who has the craft of angling. 'Hamlet,' says Coleridge, 'dislikes the man [Polonius] as false to his true allegiance in the matter of the succession to the crown.'

Pol. [*Aside.*] Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't.[1] Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

Ham. Into my grave?

Pol. Indeed, that is out o' the air. [*Aside.*] How pregnant sometimes his replies are! a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of. I will leave him, and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter.—My honourable lord, I will humbly take my leave of you.

Ham. You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal,—except my life, except my life, except my life.

Pol. Fare you well, my lord.

Ham. These tedious old fools!

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Pol. You go to seek my lord Hamlet; there he is.

Ros. God save you, sir! [*To* POLONIUS.

[*Exit* POLONIUS.

Guil. Mine honoured lord!—

Ros. My most dear lord!

Ham. My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern! Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do ye both?

Ros. As the indifferent children of the earth.

Guil. Happy, in that we are not over happy;
On Fortune's cap we are not the very button.

Ham. Nor the soles of her shoe?

[1] *There is method in 't.*] In Measure for Measure, v. 1, the Duke says of Isabella—

> 'If she be mad,—as I believe no other,—
> Her madness hath the oddest frame of sense,
> Such a dependency of thing on thing,
> As ne'er I heard in madness.'

Ros. Neither, my lord.

Ham. What 's the news?

Ros. None, my lord; but that the world 's grown honest.[1]

Ham. Then is dooms-day near:[2] but your news is not true. Let me question more in particular: What have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?

Guil. Prison, my lord!

Ham. Denmark 's a prison.

Ros. Then is the world one.

Ham. A goodly one;[3] in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one of the worst.

Ros. We think not so, my lord.

Ham. Why, then 't is none to you: for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so: to me it is a prison.

Ros. Why, then your ambition makes it one; 't is too narrow for your mind.

Ham. O God! I could be bounded in a nut-shell, and count myself a king of infinite space; were it not that I have bad dreams.

Guil. Which dreams, indeed, are ambition; for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

Ham. A dream itself is but a shadow.

Ros. Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality, that it is but a shadow's shadow.

[1] *The world 's grown honest.*] This is said artfully, with the design of drawing on Hamlet to betray the nature or cause of his melancholy.

[2] *Then is dooms-day near.*] The world cannot have grown honest unless through the terror of approaching doomsday. Hamlet is at once upon his guard, and proceeds to question his visitors.

[3] *Goodly.*] Spacious.

Ham. Then are our beggars bodies; and our monarchs and outstretched heroes the beggars' shadows:[1] Shall we to the court? for, by my fay, I cannot reason.

Ros., Guil. We 'll wait upon you.

Ham. No such matter: I will not sort you with the rest of my servants; for, to speak to you like an honest man, I am most dreadfully attended.[2] But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore?

Ros. To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

Ham. Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I thank you: and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too dear, a halfpenny.[3] Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me: come, come; nay, speak.

Guil. What should we say, my lord?

Ham. Why, anything,—but to the purpose. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties have not craft enough to colour: I know the good king and queen have sent for you.

Ros. To what end, my lord?

Ham. That you must teach me. But let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a better proposer could

[1] *Then are our beggars bodies, &c.*] Then our lean beggars, who are shadows, must be bodies, of which monarchs and heroes, who represent ambition, are the outstretched shadows. Playing or fencing with words in this way, reasoning as Hamlet calls it, was a favourite amusement among the wits of Shakspeare's time: his dramas abound with specimens of it.

[2] *Attended.*] Waited upon. Hamlet here alludes to the annoyance of his being watched and observed so much.

[3] *Too dear, a halfpenny.*] Worth a halfpenny less than your kindness. The halfpenny was a coin introduced at the beginning of the reign of James I.

charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for, or no?

Ros. What say you? [*To* GUILD.

Ham. Nay, then I have an eye of you: [*Aside.*]—[1] If you love me, hold not off.

Guil. My lord, we were sent for.

Ham. I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery,[2] and your secrecy to the king and queen moult no feather.[3] I have of late (but wherefore I know not) lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercises: and, indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you,—this brave[4] o'erhanging firmament—this majestical roof fretted with golden fire,—why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving, how express[5] and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me: no, nor woman neither—though, by your smiling, you seem to say so.

Ros. My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

Ham. Why did you laugh then, when I said, *man delights not me?*

Ros. To think, my lord, if you delight not in man,

[1] *I have an eye of you.*] I discern your purpose.

[2] *Prevent your discovery.*] Forestall or preclude your disclosure to me.

[3] *Moult no feather.*] Remain unviolated. The expression alludes to the dislodgment of feathers from helmets at tilting matches. 'The great barriers moulted not more feathers.' Webster's White Devil, i.

[4] *Brave.*] Grand.

[5] *Express.*] Distinguished, peculiar.

what lenten[1] entertainment the players shall receive from you: we coted[2] them on the way; and hither are they coming to offer you service.

Ham. He that plays the king shall be welcome,—his majesty shall have tribute of me: the adventurous knight shall use[3] his foil and target: the lover shall not sigh gratis; the humorous man[4] shall end his part in peace: the clown shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickled o' the sere;[5] and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse[6] shall halt for 't.—What players are they?

Ros. Even those you were wont to take delight in, the tragedians of the city.

Ham. How chances it they travel? their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

Ros. I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.

Ham. Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? Are they so followed?

Ros. No, indeed, they are not.

Ham. How comes it? Do they grow rusty?

Ros. Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace: But there is, sir, an aiery of children, little eyases,[7] that

[1] *Lenten.*] Meagre.

[2] *Coted.*] Came alongside of. Fr. *côtoyer.* Rosencrantz afterwards says, 'We o'erraught [i.e. overtook] them on the way,' iii. 1.

[3] *Shall use.*] Shall have employment for.

[4] *The humorous man.*] The man actuated by fitful humour or by a predominating humour.

[5] *Tickled o' the sere.*] The *sere* or *sear* was the touch-hole of a pistol. 'Tickle o' the sere' meant *ready for excitement.*

[6] *Or the blank verse.*] Though the metre should be maimed to give her scope.

[7] *Eyases.*] Young unfledged hawks. The poet refers to the 'children of Paul's,' or the 'children of the revels,' viz., the choir-boys of St. Paul's Cathedral, or of the Chapel Royal, by whom plays were performed, often in the Chapel itself, in his time.

cry out on the top of question,[1] and are most tyrannically clapped for 't: these are now the fashion; and so berattle the common stages, (so they call them;)[2] that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills, and dare scarce come[3] thither.

Ham. What, are they children? who maintains them? how are they escoted?[4] Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing?[5] will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players,[6] (as it is most like, if their means are no better,) their writers do them wrong, to make them exclaim against their own succession?[7]

Ros. Faith, there has been much to do on both sides; and the nation holds it no sin, to tarre them[8] to controversy: there was, for a while, no money bid for argument, unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.

Ham. Is 't possible?

[1] *Cry out on the top of question.*] Utter the loftiest challenges.

[2] *Berattle the common stages.*] Rattle out against the common theatres.

[3] *Afraid of goose-quills.*] Afraid of being satirised in prologues, &c., by the patronisers of the children, and dare not frequent the ordinary theatres.

[4] *Escoted.*] This is supposed to mean *paid.*

[5] *Pursue the quality, &c.*] Follow the profession only until the voice breaks. The word *quality* denoted a professed art or occupation: 'Give us a taste of your quality' [= a specimen of your art]. Hamlet, ii. 2. 'A man of such perfection as we do in our quality much want,' [quality = occupation of an outlaw]. Two Gent. of Verona, iv. 1.

[6] *Common players.*] Players on the 'common stages' which they now cry down. I cannot suppose *strolling players* to be here intended.

[7] *Their own succession.*] What they themselves are to become.

[8] *To tarre them.*] To set them on. So in K. John iv. 1—

'And like a dog that is compelled to fight,
Snatch at his master that doth tarre him on.'

Guil. O, there has been much throwing about of brains.

Ham. Do the boys carry it away?[1]

Ros. Ay, that they do, my lord; Hercules and his load[2] too.

Ham. It is not strange; for mine uncle is king of Denmark; and those that would make mowes at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, an hundred ducats a-piece, for his picture in little. There is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

[*Flourish of trumpets without.*

Guil. There are the players.

Ham. Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands. Come, the appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony: let me comply with you in the garb;[3] lest my extent to the players, which, I tell you, must show fairly outward, should more appear like entertainment than yours. You are welcome: but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

Guil. In what, my dear lord?

Ham. I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.[4]

[1] *Carry it away.*] Bear away the palm, gain the day.

[2] *Hercules, &c.*] The allusion is to Shakspeare's own theatre, the Globe, at the Bankside, Southwark, so called from its being surmounted by a figure of Hercules supporting a globe, on which was written, *Totus mundus agit histrionem* [Every one in the world acts the part of a player], corresponding to Shakspeare's 'All the world 's a stage,' &c.

[3] *Let me comply, &c.*] Let me adapt myself to you in this way, give you reception ceremoniously, lest what I extend to the players, &c., should more appear like entertainment than what I show to you.

[4] *A hawk from a handsaw.*] *Handsaw*, in this proverbial saying, was a common corruption of *hernshaw*, that is, the heron. Hamlet means that he is not to be deceived by spies. Spenser, F. Queen,

Enter POLONIUS.

Pol. Well be with you, gentlemen!

Ham. Hark you, Guildenstern,—and you too;—at each ear a hearer; that great baby you see there is not yet out of his swathing-clouts.

Ros. Happily he's the second time come to them; for they say an old man is twice a child.

Ham. I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players; mark it.—You say right, sir: o' Monday morning;[1] 't was so, indeed.

Pol. My lord, I have news to tell you.

Ham. My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome,—

Pol. The actors are come hither, my lord.

Ham. Buz, buz![2]

Pol. Upon mine honour,—

Ham. Then came each actor on his ass.—

Pol. The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastorical-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited: Seneca

VI. vii. 9, refers to the wary manner in which the hernshaw evades the falcon:—

'As when a cast of faulcons make their flight
At an hernshaw that lies aloft on wing,' &c.

[1] *You say right, &c.*] This irrelevant language is spoken aloud, to prevent Polonius from conjecturing what kind of communication Hamlet had been holding with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

[2] *Buz, buz.*] An expression of unwillingness to hear stale news, or idle rumours. That Polonius takes it in the latter sense is evident from his continuation, 'upon mine honour;' whereupon Hamlet, virtually returning his words—'If the actors are come hither upon your honour'—adds the sorry enough jest, 'then came each actor on his ass,'—words probably occurring in some old poem.

cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty,[1] these are the only men.

Ham. O Jephthah, judge of Israel,—what a treasure hadst thou!

Pol. What a treasure had he, my lord?

Ham. Why—

One fair daughter and no more,
The which he loved passing well.

Pol. Still on my daughter. [*Aside.*

Ham. Am I not i' the right, old Jephthah?

Pol. If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

Ham. Nay, that follows not.

Pol. What follows then, my lord?

Ham. Why—

As by lot, God wot,[2]

and then, you know,

It came to pass, As most like it was.

[1] *The law of writ, &c.*] Dramatic rule and the licence of varying from it.

[2] *Why, As by lot, &c.*] That is, the line that follows in the ballad is *As by lot, &c.* A version of the 'pious chanson,' or religious ballad here quoted, will be found in Percy's Reliques, from which we shall extract the first stanza, or *row* as Hamlet calls it:—

'Have you not heard these many years ago,
Jephtha was judge of Israel?
He had one only daughter and no mo,
The which he loved passing well;
And as by lot, God wot,
It so came to pass, as God's will was,
That great wars there shall be,
And none should be chosen chief but he.'

See Staunton's excellent edition of Shakspeare for another version, which the scraps quoted by Hamlet more closely resemble.

The first row of the pious chanson will show you more: for look, where my abridgment comes.[1]

Enter Four or Five Players.

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all:—I am glad to see thee well:—welcome, good friends.—O, my old friend! Thy face is valiant[2] since I saw thee last; Comest thou to beard me in Denmark?—What! my young lady[3] and mistress! By'r-lady,[4] your ladyship is nearer heaven, than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine.[5] Pray God, your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring.[6]—Masters, you are all welcome. We 'll e'en to 't like French falconers, fly at anything we see: We 'll have a speech straight: Come, give us a taste of your quality; come, a passionate speech.[7]

[1] *Abridgment.*] This, as Staunton observes, was 'another word for pastime;' thus in Midsummer Night's Dream, v. 1, 'what abridgment have you for this evening.' Shakspeare, however, designed also to signify that Hamlet's address to Polonius was *cut short* by the entrance of the players.

[2] *Valiant.*] In the Merchant of Venice, iii. 2, Bassanio, speaking of cowards wearing beards, says 'those assume but valour's excrement.' The quartos, however, have *valanced*, that is, fringed.

[3] *My young lady.*] This is addressed to a youth; for female characters were then played by boys.

[4] *By 'r-lady.*] By our lady, the Virgin Mary.

[5] *Chopine.*] The chopine was a kind of clog, with prodigiously thick soles, worn chiefly by Spanish and Italian ladies.

[6] *Cracked within the ring.*] Become too manly for the acting of female characters. The allusion is to the ring or circle on angels and other gold coins, which were rendered uncurrent when they had a crack extending from the edge beyond the ring. So in Barry's Ram Alley, v., we have 'current metal—whole within the ring;' in Dekkar's Honest Whore, vii., 'I hope you will not let my oaths be cracked in the ring;' and in B. Jonson's Magnetic Lady, 'Light gold, and cracked within the ring.'

[7] *Passionate.*] Full of emotion.

1 *Play.* What speech, my lord?

Ham. I heard thee speak me a speech once,—but it was never acted; or, if it was, not above once; for the play, I remember, pleased not the million; 't was caviare to the general:[1] but, it was (as I received it, and others, whose judgment, in such matters, cried in the top of mine)[2] an excellent play; well digested in the scenes; set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remember, one said there were no sallets[3] in the lines to make the matter savoury, nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affectation; but called it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. One chief speech in it I chiefly loved: 't was Æneas' tale to Dido; and thereabout of it especially, where he speaks of Priam's slaughter: If it live in your memory, begin at this line; let me see;—

> The rugged Pyrrhus, like the Hyrcanian beast,

—it is not so;—it begins with Pyrrhus:—

> The rugged Pyrrhus—he, whose sable arms,
> Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
> When he lay couched in the ominous horse—
> Hath now this dread and black complexion smeared
> With heraldry more dismal; head to foot

[1] *Caviare to the general.*] Too fine for the generality of people. ''Tis well your hate points at the general.' Shirley's Humorous Courtier. *Caviare* was a Russian delicacy prepared from the roe of the sturgeon; and to have a relish for it was considered a mark of refined taste. 'They present me with some sharp sauce, or a dish of delicate anchovies, or a *caviare*, to entice me back again.' Brewer's Lingua, ii. 1. "Let us go and taste some light dinner, a dish of sliced *caviare*, or so.' B. Jonson's Cynthia's Revels, iii. 1.

[2] *Cried in the top of mine.*] Crowed over mine; had much higher authority than mine.

[3] *No sallets.*] No salads; no adventitious seasoning.

Now is he total gules; horridly tricked [1]
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,
Baked and impasted with the parching streets,
That lend a tyrannous and damned light
To their vile murders: Roasted in wrath and fire,
And thus o'er-sized with coagulate gore,
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
Old grandsire Priam seeks.

Pol. 'Fore God, my lord, well spoken; with good accent, and good discretion.

1 *Play.* Anon he finds him
Striking too short at Greeks; his antique sword,
Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,
Repugnant to command: Unequal matched,
Pyrrhus at Priam drives; in rage strikes wide;
But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
The unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,
Seeming to feel his blow, with flaming top
Stoops to his base; and with a hideous crash
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear: for, lo! his sword,
Which was declining on the milky head
Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' the air to stick:
So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood;
And, like a neutral to his will and matter,
Did nothing.
But, as we often see, against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
The bold winds speechless, and the orb below
As hush as death: anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region: [2] So, after Pyrrhus' pause,
Aroused vengeance sets him new a work;
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
On Mars's armours, forged for proof eterne,
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam.—
Out, out, thou strumpet, Fortune! All you gods,

[1] *Total gules; horridly tricked.*] *Gules*, in Heraldry, is a red colour; *tricked* is fantastically painted.

[2] *Region.*] *See* Note 1, p. 71.

In general synod, take away her power;
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven,
As low as to the fiends.

Pol. This is too long.

Ham. It shall to the barber's, with your beard.[1]—Prithee, say on:—He 's for a jig, or a tale of bawdry; or he sleeps: —say on: come to Hecuba.

1 *Play.* But who, O who, hath seen the mobled queen,—

Ham. The mobled queen?[2]

Pol. That 's good: *mobled queen* is good.

1 *Play.* Run barefoot up and down, threat'ning the flame
With bisson rheum;[3] a clout about that head,
Where late the diadem stood; and, for a robe,
About her lank and all o'er-teemed loins
A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up;
Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steeped,
'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have pronounced.
But if the gods themselves did see her then,
When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,
The instant burst of clamour that she made,
(Unless things mortal move them not at all,)
Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,[4]
And passion in the gods.[5]

Pol. Look, whêr[6] he has not turned his colour, and has tears in 's eyes.—Pray you, no more.

Ham. 'T is well; I 'll have thee speak out the rest soon. —Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed?

[1] *With your beard.*] To be cut short and trimmed, as your beard is done. No doubt *beard* has an oblique satirical reference to Polonius' wisdom or judgment.

[2] *Mobled.*] Muffled.

[3] *Bisson rheum.*] Blinding tears.

[4] *Made milch.*] Made moist as with tears.

[5] *Passion.*] Emotion, sorrow.

[6] *Whêr.*] This contraction for *whether* was very common.

Do you hear? let them be well used; for they are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time. After your death you were better have a bad epitaph, than their ill report while you live.

Pol. My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

Ham. Od's bodykins, man, better: Use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping! Use them after your own honour and dignity: the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in.

Pol. Come, sirs.

[*Exit* POL., *with some of the* Players.

Ham. Follow him, friends: we 'll hear a play to-morrow.—Dost thou hear me, old friend? can you play *The Murder of Gonzago?*

1 *Play.* Ay, my lord.

Ham. We 'll have 't to-morrow night. You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down, and insert in 't? could you not?

1 *Play.* Ay, my lord.

Ham. Very well.—Follow that lord; and look you mock him not. [*Exit* Player.] My good friends, [*To* ROS. *and* GUIL.] I 'll leave you till night: you are welcome to Elsinore.

Ros. Good my lord—

Ham. Ay, so, God be wi' you:—[*Exeunt* ROS. *and* GUIL.

Now I am alone.

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous, that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his whole conceit,
That from her working all his visage wanned;
Tears in his eyes, distraction in 's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting[1]

[1] *Function.*] Faculty of action.

With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!
For Hecuba!
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech;
Make mad the guilty, and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant; and amaze, indeed,
The very faculties of eyes and ears.
Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,[1]
And can say nothing; no, not for a king,
Upon whose property,[2] and most dear life,
A damned defeat was made. Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?
Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face?
Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i' the throat,[3]

[1] *Peak like John-a-dreams, &c.*] Creep about languidly like a sleepy-headed dreamy fellow, unready in my cause. John-a-dreams was a cant name for such a fellow.

[2] *Property.*] Prerogative, rank, state.

[3] *Gives me the lie.*] The 'word of the lie,' as Bacon calls it, was in old times a thing of serious moment: To *give one the lie* was to impute to him a cowardice that is afraid to speak truth, and challenged him to stake his personal safety in defence of his reputation. There were, however, two principal degrees of dishonour imputed in this way:—simply to give one *the lie*, was to impute an untruth that might have been somewhat hastily or inconsiderately uttered; but *the lie in the throat* implied deliberate and deeply-intended falsehood, and this charge was often aggravated by some such addition as that in the text—'as deep as to the lungs.'

'Did I say you were an honest man? I had lied in my throat if I had said so,' 2 K. Henry IV. i. 2. 'As low as to thy heart,

As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this? ha!
Why, I should take it: for it cannot be,
But I am pigeon-livered, and lack gall
To make oppression bitter; or, ere this,
I should have fatted all the region[1] kites
With this slave's offal:—Bloody, bawdy villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
O vengeance!—
Why what an ass am I! This is most brave,
That I, the son of the dear murdered,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words,
And fall a cursing, like a very drab,
A scullion!
Fie upon 't! foh! About, my brains! I have heard,
That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul, that presently

through the false passage of thy throat, thou liest,' K. Richard II., i. 1. 'I will turn thy falsehood to thy heart, where it was forged, with my rapier's point,' *Ibid.*, iv. 1.

Fuller, in his Profane State, ch. 12, says, 'He that is called a liar to his face is also called a coward in the same breath, if he swallows it; and the party charged doth conceive that if he vindicates his valour, his truth will be given him into the bargain.' The idea of the cowardice involved in falsehood may be traced to Plutarch's Lysander, where, according to North's translation, it is said, 'He that deceiveth his enemy, and breaketh his oath to him, showeth plainly that he feareth him, but that he careth not for God.' Montaigne borrowed this sentiment from his favourite Plutarch, though Bacon (Essay on Truth) seems to give Montaigne the credit of having originated it.

[1] *Region.*] Shakspeare sometimes uses this word to denote the airy region, or the element. It has this sense in the Player's speech about Pyrrhus, p. 67, In the Merry Wives, iii. 2, 'He is of too high a region,' means *his element is too high.*

They have proclaimed their malefactions;
For murder, though it hath no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ. I 'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father,
Before mine uncle: I 'll observe his looks;
I 'll tent him to the quick; if he but blench,
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil: and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and, perhaps,
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
(As he is very potent with such spirits)
Abuses me[1] to damn me: I 'll have grounds
More relative than this:—the play 's the thing,[2]
Wherein I 'll catch the conscience of the king. [*Exit.*

[1] *Abuses me.*] Practises on my credulity with a forged story. In the old 'Historie of Hamblet,' it is said that the prince had learned that science with which the evil spirit abuses men, and that perhaps, through the power of his melancholy, he received such impressions as enabled him to divine past occurrences with which no man had acquainted him.

[2] *The play 's the thing.*] Compare what Massinger (Roman Actor, ii.) makes Paris say, 'Now could you but persuade the emperor to see a comedy we have,' &c.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the Castle.*

Enter KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN.

King. And can you, by no drift of circumstance,[1]
Get from him why he puts on this confusion;
Grating so harshly all his days of quiet
With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?
Ros. He does confess he feels himself distracted;
But from what cause he will by no means speak.
Guil. Nor do we find him forward to be sounded;
But, with a crafty madness, keeps aloof,
When we would bring him on to some confession
Of his true state.
Queen. Did he receive you well?
Ros. Most like a gentleman.
Guil. But with much forcing of his disposition.
Ros. Niggard of question;[2] but, of our demands,
Most free in his reply.
Queen. Did you assay him[3]
To any pastime?

[1] *Drift of circumstance.*] Design of circumvention.

[2] *Niggard of question, &c.*] Niggard of what we tried to draw out of him, but yet kindly and courteous in his manner of answering our inquiries.

[3] *Assay him.*] Try to induce him; or, perhaps, try his inclination.

Ros. Madam, it so fell out, that certain players
We o'er-raught on the way: of these we told him;
And there did seem in him a kind of joy
To hear of it. They are about the court;
And, as I think, they have already order
This night to play before him.

Pol. 'T is most true:
And he beseeched me to entreat your majesties,
To hear and see the matter.

King. With all my heart; and it doth much content me
To hear him so inclined.
Good gentlemen, give him a further edge,
And drive his purpose on to these delights.

Ros. We shall, my lord. [*Exeunt* Ros. *and* Guil.

King. Sweet Gertrude, leave us too:
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither;
That he, as 't were by accident, may here
Affront[1] Ophelia.
Her father, and myself,—lawful espials,—
Will so bestow ourselves, that seeing, unseen,
We may of their encounter frankly judge;
And gather by him, as he is behaved,
If 't be the affliction of his love or no,
That thus he suffers for.

Queen. I shall obey you:—
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
That your good beauties be the happy cause
Of Hamlet's wildness; so shall I hope your virtues
Will bring him to his wonted way again,
To both your honours.

[1] *Affront.*] Meet, encounter. So in Cook's Green's Tu Quoque, 'This I must caution you of, in your affront or salute, never to move your hat.' And in Spenser's F. Queen, 'Who him affronting soon to fight was ready prest.'

Oph. Madam, I wish it may.

[*Exit* QUEEN.

Pol. Ophelia, walk you here :—Gracious, so please you,
We will bestow ourselves :—Read on this book;

[*To* OPHELIA.

That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness.—We are oft to blame in this,—
'T is too much proved, that, with devotion's visage,
And pious action, we do sugar o'er
The devil himself.

King. [*Aside.*] O, 't is too true!
How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it,
Than is my deed to my most painted word:
O heavy burden!

Pol. I hear him coming; let 's withdraw, my lord.

[*Exeunt* KING *and* POLONIUS.

Enter HAMLET.

Ham. To be, or not to be,—that is the question:
Whether 't is nobler in the mind, to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,[1]
And by opposing end them.—To die,—to sleep,—
No more;[2] and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to?—'t is a consummation

[1] *Sea of troubles.*] Perhaps the poet meant *see*, or *siege*, = *seat*, which is in metaphorical keeping with the besieging slings and arrows; but 'sea of troubles' may be supposed, in a collective sense, to imply no special metaphor.

[2] *No more.*] It seems uncertain whether these words are assertive or interrogative, viz., whether they mean *that is all*, or *is that all?*

Devoutly to be wished. To die,—to sleep;[1]—
To sleep! perchance to dream!—ay, there 's the rub;[2]
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off[3] this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there 's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life:
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pang of disprized love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus[4] make
With a bare bodkin?[5] who would fardels[6] bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,

1 *Devoutly.*] Perhaps this may mean—consistently with religion.

2 *Rub.*] A *rub* was an obstacle in a bowling alley, that might arrest or turn aside the ball. Sir T. Overbury, in his Characters, speaking of the Creditor's dislike of the prayer 'forgive us our debts,' &c., says, 'He either quite leaves out or leaps over that; it is a dangerous rub in the alley of his conscience.' So in Fuller's Holy State, i. 2, 'A rub to an overthrown ball proves an help by hindering it.'

3 *Shuffled off, &c.*] Put off this mortal body that is now coiled around the soul.

4 *Quietus.*] The phrase *Quietus est*, meaning *is released from obligation or trouble*, was used in legal discharges or acquittances. So in the old play of The Gamester, v., 'Some younger brother would have thanked me, and given my *quietus*;' and Overbury says of the Franklin, 'He needs not fear his audit, for his *quietus* is in heaven.' In Fletcher's Chances, ii. 1, Antonio, when wounded, says, 'He has given me my *quietus est*.'

5 *Bodkin.*] A name for a short dagger.

6 *Fardels.*] Packs or burdens. 'There are also officers who attend and take view of the packs, fardels, and other parcels of commodity landed,' Wheeler's Treatise of Commerce (1601), p. 60. 'The fardel of all this ware—carried upon the backs of these two beasts,' Overbury's Characters (The Hypocrite).

But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;
And enterprizes of great pith and moment,
With this regard,[1] their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.—Soft you now!
The fair Ophelia!—Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered.

Oph. Good my lord,
How does your honour for this many a day?

Ham. I humbly thank you: well, well, well.

Oph. My lord, I have remembrances of yours,
That I have longed long to re-deliver;
I pray you, now receive them.

Ham. No, no. I never gave you aught.

Oph. My honoured lord, I know right well you did;
And with them, words of so sweet breath composed
As made the things more rich: their perfume lost,
Take these again; for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There, my lord.

Ham. Ha, ha! are you honest?[2]

Oph. My lord?

Ham. Are you fair?

Oph. What means your lordship?

Ham. That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.

[1] *This regard.*] This regard of the future.
[2] *Honest.*] Chaste.

Oph. Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

Ham. Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd, than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness: this was some time a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.

Oph. Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

Ham. You should not have believed me: for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock, but we shall relish of it: I loved you not.

Oph. I was the more deceived.

Ham. Get thee to a nunnery; why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things, that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious; with more offences at my beck[1] than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in: What should such fellows as I do crawling between heaven and earth! We are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us: Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?

Oph. At home, my lord.

Ham. Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in 's own house. Farewell.

Oph. O, help him, you sweet heavens!

Ham. If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go; farewell: Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters[2] you make of them. To a nunnery, go; and quickly too. Farewell.

[1] *At my beck.*] That I am ready to do when occasion requires.

[2] *Monsters.*] Viz., Horned men, cuckolds. This is spoken in reference to the queen's conduct.

Oph. O heavenly powers restore him!

Ham. I have heard of your paintings too, well enough. God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another; you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance: Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages: those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go.

[*Exit* HAMLET.

Oph. O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion,[1] and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers,—quite, quite down!
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That sucked the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;
That unmatched form and feature of blown youth,
Blasted with ecstasy: O, woe is me!
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

Re-enter KING *and* POLONIUS.

King. Love! his affections do not that way tend;

[1] *The glass of fashion.*] What was meant by calling a person the glass of fashion, mirror of courtesy, and the like, is evident from 2 K. Henry IV. ii. 3—

'By his light
Did all the chivalry of England move,
To do brave acts: he was indeed the glass
Wherein the noble youth did dress themselves.'

So also in B. Jonson's Dedic. of his Cynthia's Revels—'To the special fountain of manners, the Court: in thee the whole kingdom dresseth itself, and is ambitious to use thee as her glass.'

Nor what he spake, though it lacked form a little,
Was not like madness. There 's something in his soul,
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood;
And, I do doubt, the hatch and the disclose[1]
Will be some danger: Which for to prevent,
I have, in quick determination,
Thus set it down: He shall with speed to England
For the demand of our neglected tribute:
Haply, the seas, and countries different,
With variable objects, shall expel
This something-settled matter in his heart;
Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus
From fashion of himself. What think you on 't?

Pol. It shall do well; but yet do I believe,
The origin and commencement of his grief
Sprung from neglected love.—How now, Ophelia,—
You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said;
We heard it all.—My lord, do as you please;
But, if you hold it fit, after the play,
Let his queen mother all alone entreat him
To show his griefs; let her be round[2] with him;
And I 'll be placed, so please you, in the ear
Of all their conference; If she find him not,
To England send him: or confine him where
Your wisdom best shall think.

King. It shall be so;
Madness in great ones must not unwatched go. [*Exeunt.*

[1] *The disclose.*] The offspring or issue.

[2] *Round.*] Plain-spoken, free and full. *Round terms* are full and explicit, not abbreviated.

SCENE II.—*A Hall in the same.*

Enter HAMLET, *and certain* Players.

Ham. Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus: but use all gently: for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul, to see a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings,[1] who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows[2] and noise: I could have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod:[3] pray you, avoid it.

1 *Play.* I warrant your honour.

[1] *The groundlings.*] Those of the audience that occupied the yard or pit of the theatre. The censure here passed on the taste of the habitués of the pit might give offence to some; but our poet, zealous for the reformation of such taste, presently asserts that the opinion of one judicious hearer should, in the actor's estimation, outweigh a whole theatre of others.

[2] *Dumb show.*] 'The *dumb show* consisted of dumb actors who by their dress and action prepared the spectators for the matter and substance of each ensuing act, respectively; as also of much hieroglyphical scenery, calculated for the same purpose,' Warton's Observations on Spenser, vol. ii., p. 80. The play-scene in Hamlet is introduced by a *dumb show.*

[3] *Termagant . . . Herod.*] Termagant, one of the Saracen deities, and Herod, the king of Jewry, were clamorous and violent characters in the old Moralities. A blustering ranting style especially characterised the acting of Termagant. Chaucer, in the Miller's Tale, says:—

> 'Sometime, to show his lightness and maistrye,
> He playeth Herod on a scaffold hye.

Ham. Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature; for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 't were, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body[1] of the time his form and pressure. Now, this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must, in your allowance, o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play—and heard others praise, and that highly—not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of christians, nor the gait of christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of Nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

1 *Play.* I hope we have reformed that indifferently with us, sir.

Ham. O, reform it altogether. And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them; for there be of them, that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too; though, in the mean time, some necessary question of the play be then to be considered: that 's villainous; and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go, make you ready. [*Exeunt* Players.

Enter POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN.

How now, my lord? will the king hear this piece of work?

[1] *The age and body of the time.*] The present age with all its constituent features.

Pol. And the queen too, and that presently.
Ham. Bid the players make haste. [*Exit* POL.
Will you too help to hasten them?
Both. We will, my lord.
[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.

Ham. What, ho, Horatio!

Enter HORATIO.

Hor. Here, sweet lord, at your service.
Ham. Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As e'er my conversation coped withal.
Hor. O, my dear lord,—
Ham. Nay, do not think I flatter:
For what advancement may I hope from thee,
That no revenue hast but thy good spirits,
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flattered?
No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp;
And crook the pregnant[1] hinges of the knee,
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath sealed thee for herself: for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all,[2] that suffers nothing;
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Hath ta'en with equal thanks: and blessed are those

[1] *Pregnant.*] Ready.

[2] *In suffering all, &c.*] That through cheerfully bearing all things, suffers nothing. Hamlet himself had not the elasticity of mind he here attributes to Horatio. In saying, as he does presently, 'blessed are those whose blood and judgment are so well comingled,' &c., he is conscious that he himself is not thus blessed.

Whose blood and judgment are so well comingled,
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee.—Something too much of this.—
There is a play to-night before the king;
One scene of it comes near the circumstance
Which I have told thee of my father's death:
I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,
Even with the very comment of thy soul
Observe mine uncle: if his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damned ghost that we have seen;
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face;
And, after, we will both our judgments join
In censure of his seeming.

Hor. Well, my lord,
If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing,
And 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft.

Ham. They are coming to the play; I must be idle:[1]
Get you a place.

Enter KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, *and other* Lords *attendant, with the* Guard, *carrying torches. Danish March. Sound a flourish.*

King. How fares our cousin, Hamlet?

Ham. Excellent, i' faith; of the cameleon's dish: I eat the air, promise-crammed:[2] You cannot feed capons so.

[1] *Be idle.*] Staunton properly observes that to be idle here means to affect being crazy.

[2] *I eat the air, &c.*] So in 2 *K. Henry IV.* i. 3, we have 'Eating

King. I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet; these words are not mine.

Ham. No, nor mine now—My lord,—you played once in the university, you say? [*To* POLONIUS.

Pol. That I did, my lord, and was accounted a good actor.

Ham. And what did you enact?

Pol. I did enact Julius Cæsar: I was killed i' the Capitol: Brutus killed me.

Ham. It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.—Be the players ready?

Ros. Ay, my lord; they stay upon your patience.

Queen. Come hither, my good Hamlet, sit by me.

Ham. No, good mother, here 's metal more attractive.

Pol. O ho! do you mark that? [*To the* KING.

Ham. Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

[*Lying down at* OPHELIA'S *feet.*

Oph. No, my lord.

Ham. I mean, my head upon your lap?

Oph. Ay, my lord.

Ham. Do you think I meant country matters?

Oph. I think nothing, my lord. You are merry, my lord.

Ham. Who, I?

Oph. Ay, my lord.

Ham. O God! your only jig-maker.[1] What should a man do, but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within these two hours.

Oph. Nay, 't is twice two months, my lord.

Ham. So long? Nay, then, let the devil wear black, for

the air on promise of supply.'

[1] *Jig-maker.*] A *jig*, in Shakspeare's time, was a merry ballad, as well as a dance. 'Jig-makers and chroniclers shall pick something out of you,' Dekkar's Honest Whore, i.

I'll have[1] a suit of sables. O heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there 's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year: But, by'r lady, he must build churches, then: or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is, *For, O, for, O, the hobby-horse is forgot.*[2]

Hautboys play. The dumb show enters.

Enter a King *and a* Queen, *very lovingly; the* Queen *embracing him. She kneels, and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up, and declines his head upon her neck; lays him down upon a bank of flowers; she, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the* King's *ears, and exit. The* Queen *returns; finds the* King *dead, and makes passionate action. The poisoner, with some two or three mutes, comes in again, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away. The poisoner woos the Queen with gifts; she seems loath and unwilling awhile, but, in the end, accepts his love.*

[*Exeunt.*

Oph. What means this, my lord?

Ham. Marry, this is miching mallecho;[3] it means mischief.

[1] *For I'll have, &c.*] It has been suggested that Shakspeare wrote, *'fore I'll have;* it does not seem easy to find a good sense in the ordinary reading.

[2] *The hobby-horse is forgot.* The hobby-horse was a figure like a horse put in motion by a person who seemed to sit on its back, and was anciently used in the morris dances at the May-day and Christmas festivities. In the eyes of puritanical rigour it was a gross abuse, and it was eventually proscribed. There appears to have been in Shakspeare's time some well-known ballad, the burden of which is here quoted by Hamlet. So, in B. Jonson's Satyre, 'But see, the hobby-horse is forgot;' and in Fletcher's Women Pleased, iv. 1, 'Shall the hobby-horse be forgot then?'

[3] *Miching mallecho.*] Sneaking mischief. *Mallecho* is from the Spanish. A *micher* is an idler, a skulking fellow, and sometimes a sly thief. 'Shall the blessed sun of heaven prove a micher?' 1 K.

Oph. Belike, this show imports the argument of the play.

Enter Prologue.

Ham. We shall know by this fellow: the players cannot keep counsel; they 'll tell all.

Oph. Will he tell us what this show[1] meant?

Ham. Ay.

Pro. For us, and for our tragedy,
Here, stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently.

Ham. Is this a prologue, or the poesy of a ring?

Oph. 'T is brief, my lord.

Ham. As woman's love.

Enter Gonzago *and* Baptista.

Gons. Full thirty times hath Phœbus' cart gone round
Neptune's salt wash, and Tellus' orbed ground;
And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen
About the world have times twelve thirties been;
Since love our hearts, and Hymen did our hands,
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

Bapt. So many journeys may the sun and moon
Make us again count o'er, ere love be done!
But, woe is me, you are so sick of late,
So far from cheer, and from your former state,
That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must:
For women's fear and love holds quantity;[2]
In neither aught,[3] or in extremity.

Henry IV., ii. 4. 'Look to it, micher,' Ram Alley. 'I never looked for better of that rascal since he came miching first into our house,' Heywood's Woman killed with Kindness.

[1] *This show.*] *See* Note 2, p. 81. It was consistent enough with the purpose of the *dumb show* that a king and queen should foreshow a duke and duchess.

[2] *Holds quantity.*] Are in the same proportion.

[3] *In neither aught,* &c.] In neither case is there any, or else it is excessive.

Now, what my love is, proof hath made you know;
And as my love is sized, my fear is so.
Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear;
Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.
Gonz. 'Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too;
My operant powers their functions leave[1] to do:
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
Honoured, beloved; and haply, one as kind
For husband shalt thou—
Bapt. O, confound the rest!
Such love must needs be treason in my breast:
In second husband let me be accurst!
None wed the second, but who killed the first.[2]

Ham. [*Aside.*] Wormwood, wormwood.

The instances that second marriage move,
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love;
A second time I kill my lord that 's dead,
When second husband kisses me in bed.
Gonz. I do believe you think what now you speak;
But what we do determine oft we break.
Purpose is but the slave to memory;
Of violent birth, but poor validity:
Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree;
But fall unshaken when they mellow be.
Most necessary 't is that we forget
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt:
What to ourselves in passion we propose,
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.
The violence of either grief or joy
Their own enactures with themselves destroy:
Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament,
Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.
This world is not for aye; nor 't is not strange,
That even our loves should with our fortunes change;

1 *Leave.*] Cease. *See* Note 1, p. 20.

2 *None wed, &c.*] No women wed a second husband without at least having wished the death of the first.

For 't is a question left us yet to prove,
Whether love lead fortune, or else fortune love.
The great man down, you mark, his favourite flies;
The poor advanced makes friends of enemies.
And hitherto doth love on fortune tend:
For who not needs shall never lack a friend;
And who in want a hollow friend doth try,
Directly seasons him his enemy.
But, orderly to end where I begun,—
Our wills and fates do so contrary run,
That our devices still are overthrown;
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own;
So think thou wilt no second husband wed;
But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.

Bapt. Nor earth to me give food, nor heaven light!
Sport and repose lock from me, day and night!
To desperation turn my trust and hope!
An anchor's[1] cheer in prison be my scope!
Each opposite that blanks the face of joy,
Meet what I would have well, and it destroy!
Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,
If, once a widow, ever I be wife!

Ham. If she should break it now!— [*To* OPH.

Gons. 'T is deeply sworn. Sweet, leave me here awhile:
My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile
The tedious day with sleep. [*Sleeps.*

Bapt. Sleep rock thy brain,
And never come mischance between us twain! [*Exit.*

Ham. Madam, how like you this play?

Queen. The lady protests too much, methinks.

Ham. O, but she 'll keep her word.

King. Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence in 't?

Ham. No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest; no offence i' the world.

[1] *Anchor's.*] Anchoret's, or anchorite's: a hermit's fare.

King. What do you call the play?

Ham. The mouse trap. Marry, how? Tropically.[1] This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna: Gonzago is the duke's name; his wife, Baptista: you shall see anon 't is a knavish piece of work: but what of that? your majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us not: Let the galled jade wince, our withers[2] are unwrung.

Enter Lucianus.

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.

Oph. You are a good chorus, my lord.

Ham. I could interpret[3] between you and your love, if I could see the puppets dallying. Begin, murderer; leave thy damnable faces, and begin.
Come;—The croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.

Luc. Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing;
Confederate season, else no creature seeing;
Thou mixture rank of midnight weeds collected,
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
Thy natural magic and dire property
On wholesome life usurp immediately.
[*Pours the poison in his ears.*

[1] *Tropically.*] Figuratively.

[2] *Our withers, &c.*] Our shoulders are not galled. 'The poor jade is wrung in the withers,' 1 K. Henry IV. ii. 1. Fuller says of the faithful minister, 'I should suspect his preaching had no salt in it, if no galled horse did wince.' Holy State, ii. 9.

[3] *Interpret.*] The allusion here is to the puppet-shows, the *motions* as they were called, which were explained to the spectators by a truchman or interpreter. 'O excellent motion! O exceeding puppet! Now will he interpret to her,' Two Gent. of Verona, ii. 1. 'Neither could it stand with the dignity of these shows (after the most miserable and desperate shift of the puppets) to require a truchman,' B. Jonson's King's Entertainment at Coronation. 'That [painting] he has in his parlour, which he will describe to you like a motion.' Overbury's Characters (The Ingrosser of Corn).

Ham. He poisons him i' the garden for his estate. His name 's Gonzago; the story is extant, and writ in choice Italian: you shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

Oph. The king rises!

Ham. What, frighted with false fire!

Queen. How fares my lord?

Pol. Give o'er the play.

King. Give me some light:—away!

All. Lights, lights, lights!

[*Exeunt all but* HAM. *and* HOR.

Ham. *Why, let the stricken deer go weep,*
The hart ungalled play:
For some must watch, while some must sleep;
So runs the world away.—

Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers, (if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk[1] with me,) with two Provincial roses[2] on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry[3] of players, sir?

Hor. Half a share.

Ham. A whole one, I.

For thou dost know, O Damon dear,
This realm dismantled[5] was
Of Jove himself; and now reigns here
A very, very—peacock.

Hor. You might have rhymed.

[1] *Turn Turk.*] To turn Turk was to apostatise, to prove unfaithful or hostile.

[2] *Provincial roses.*] Perhaps Provençal roses: rosettes of ribbon, formerly worn on shoes. *Razed* is slashed; but perhaps *rayed*, meaning striped, was Shakspeare's word, or *raised*, i.e. thick-soled.

[3] *Cry.*] Company: properly applied to a pack of hounds.

[4] *I.*] The single letter *I* was often used for *ay*, that is, *yea*.

[5] *Dismantled, &c.*] Hamlet, who here gives Horatio the name of

Ham. O good Horatio, I 'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound. Didst perceive?

Hor. Very well, my lord.

Ham. Upon the talk of the poisoning?

Hor. I did very well note him.

Ham. Ah, ha!—Come, some music; come the recorders.—

For if the king like not the comedy,
Why, then,—belike, he likes it not, perdy.—

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Come, some music.

Guil. Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

Ham. Sir, a whole history.

Guil. The king, sir,—

Ham. Ay, sir, what of him?

Guil. Is, in his retirement, marvellous distempered.

Ham. With drink, sir?

Guil. No, my lord, with choler.

Ham. Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to his doctor; for, for me to put him to his purgation would, perhaps,[1] plunge him into more choler.

Guil. Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame, and start not so wildly from my affair.

Ham. I am tame, sir:—pronounce.

Damon, in allusion to the friendship of Damon and Pythias, means that the realm of Denmark was bereft of a king who had the majesty of Jove himself, and that now there reigned a very peacock, or, as the rhyme prompts, a very ass.

[1] *Put him to his purgation.*] 'You are a loose liver, sir, I have put you to your purgation.' Middleton's Mad World, iii. The double meaning of *choler* was often played upon. 'A god—that must have rhubarb to purge his choler, lest he be too angry.' Donne's Devotions, viii.

Guil. The queen, your mother, in most great affliction of spirit hath sent me to you.

Ham. You are welcome.

Guil. Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's commandment: if not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of my business.

Ham. Sir, I cannot.

Guil. What, my lord?

Ham. Make you a wholesome answer; my wit 's diseased. But, sir, such answer as I can make you shall command; or, rather, as you say, my mother: therefore, no more, but to the matter: My mother, you say,—

Ros. Then thus she says: Your behaviour hath struck her into amazement and admiration.[1]

Ham. O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother! —But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration?

Ros. She desires to speak with you in her closet, ere you go to bed.

Ham. We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further trade with us?

Ros. My lord, you once did love me.

Ham. So I do still, by these pickers and stealers.[2]

Ros. Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? you do freely bar the door of your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your friend.

Ham. Sir, I lack advancement.

Ros. How can that be, when you have the voice of the king himself for your succession in Denmark?

[1] *Admiration.*] Wonder.

[2] *Pickers and stealers.*] Hands. 'To keep my hands from picking and stealing.' Church Catechism.

Ham. Ay, but *While the grass grows,*—the proverb is something musty.

Enter one with a Recorder.

O, the recorder:[1] let me see.—To withdraw with you:—Why do you go about to recover the wind of me,[2] as if you would drive me into a toil?

Guil. O, my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.

Ham. I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?

Guil. My lord, I cannot.

Ham. I pray you.

Guil. Believe me, I cannot.

Ham. I do beseech you.

Guil. I know no touch of it, my lord.

Ham. 'T is as easy as lying: govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most excellent music. Look you, these are the stops.

Guil. But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill.

Ham. Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me. You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to

[1] *The recorder.*] The *recorder* was a kind of flute, admired for its sweet soft tone. To *record* signified to warble or sing as a bird; hence the name of the instrument. Milton mentions 'the Dorian mood of flutes and soft recorders.' P. L. i. 551.

[2] *Recover the wind of me.*] To ascertain where the wind sits with me. The questions by which the spies tried to find out Hamlet's secret were as straws that are thrown up 'to know where sits the wind.'

the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ; yet cannot you make it speak. 'S blood,[1] do you think that I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me,[2] you cannot play upon me.

Enter POLONIUS.

God bless you, sir!

Pol. My lord, the queen would speak with you, and presently.

Ham. Do you see that cloud, that 's almost in shape like a camel?

Pol. By the mass, and 't is like a camel, indeed.

Ham. Methinks, it is like a weasel.

Pol. It is backed like a weasel.

Ham. Or like a whale?

Pol. Very like a whale.

Ham. Then will I come to my mother by and by.[3]—[*Aside.*] They fool me to the top of my bent.—I will come by and by.

[1] *'S blood.*] In the middle ages originated those awful oaths by the blood, life, wounds, death, body, foot, &c., of the Redeemer, which afterwards became so profanely familiar in the forms—zounds, or 's wounds (God's wounds), 's death, 's foot, &c. Chaucer, in the Pardoner's Tale, says—

'It is grisly for to hear them swear;
Our blissful Lordes body they to-tear.'

[2] *Fret me.*] To *fret* means to *irritate;* it also means to furnish guitars, &c., with *frets,* or little ridges that cross the finger-board under the strings and mark the stops. Our dramatist, no doubt, here intended a quibble. 'Rhetoric and eloquence (as Plato saith) is an art which quickeneth men's spirits at her pleasure: and her chiefest skill is to know how to move passions and affections thoroughly, which are as stops and sounds of the soul, that would be played upon with a fine-fingered hand of a cunning master.' North's Plutarch, Pericles.

[3] *By and by.*] Immediately.

Pol. I will say so. [*Exit* POL.

Ham. *By and by* is easily said.—Leave me, friends.
[*Exeunt* ROS., GUIL., HOR., *&c.*

'T is now the very witching time of night;
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world: Now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on. Soft! now to my mother.—
O, heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
The soul of Nero[1] enter this firm bosom:
Let me be cruel, not unnatural:
I will speak daggers to her, but use none;
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites,—
How in my words soever she be shent,[2]
To give them seals[3] never, my soul, consent! [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*A Room in the same.*

Enter KING, ROSENCRANTZ, *and* GUILDENSTERN.

King. I like him not; nor stands it safe with us
To let his madness range. Therefore, prepare you;
I your commission will forthwith despatch,
And he to England shall along with you:
The terms of our estate may not endure
Hazard so dangerous as doth hourly grow
Out of his lunacies.

[1] *The soul of Nero.*] Nero ordered his mother Agrippina to be slain. Agrippina, after the death of her husband Domitius, had married the emperor Claudius her uncle; and this circumstance, perhaps, suggested the name for Hamlet's uncle.

[2] *Shent.*] Hurt.

[3] *Give them seals.*] Confirm, fulfil, or make good the words.

Guil. We will ourselves provide:[1]
Most holy and religious fear it is,
To keep those many many bodies safe,
That live and feed upon your majesty.

Ros. The single and peculiar life is bound,
With all the strength and armour of the mind,
To keep itself from 'noyance; but much more
That spirit upon whose weal depend and rest
The lives of many. The cease of majesty
Dies not alone; but, like a gulf, doth draw
What 's near it with it: it is a massy wheel,
Fixed on the summit of the highest mount,
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
Are mortised and adjoined; which, when it falls,
Each small annexment, petty consequence,
Attends the boist'rous ruin. Never alone
Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.

King. Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage;
For we will fetters put upon this fear,
Which now goes too free-footed.

Ros., Guil. We will haste us. [*Ex.* Ros. *and* Guil.

Enter Polonius.

Pol. My lord, he 's going to his mother's closet:
Behind the arras I 'll convey myself,
To hear the process; I 'll warrant she 'll tax him home.
And, as you said, and wisely was it said,
'T is meet that some more audience than a mother,
Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear
The speech of vantage.[2] Fare you well, my liege:

[1] *Ourselves provide.*] Prepare ourselves.
[2] *Of vantage.*] With advantage.

I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,
And tell you what I know.

King. Thanks, dear my lord. [*Exit* POL.

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't,
A brother's murder!—Pray can I not;
Though inclination be as sharp as will,
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,—
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens,
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy,
But to confront the visage of offence?
And what's in prayer but this two-fold force,—
To be forestalled ere we come to fall,
Or pardoned being down? Then I'll look up;
My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? *Forgive me my foul murder?*—
That cannot be; since I am still possessed
Of those effects for which I did the murder,—
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
May one be pardoned, and retain the offence?
In the corrupted currents of this world,
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;
And oft 't is seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law: But 't is not so above:
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature; and we ourselves compelled,
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
To give in evidence. What then? what rests?
Try what repentance can: What can it not?
Yet what can it, when one can not repent!

O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
O limed soul, that struggling to be free
Art more engaged! Help, angels! make assay;[1]
Bow stubborn knees; and, heart with strings of steel,
Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe!
All may be well! [*Retires, and kneels.*

Enter HAMLET.

Ham. Now might I do it pat, now he is[2] praying;
And now I 'll do 't:—and so he goes to heaven:
And so am I revenged? That would be scanned:[3]
A villain kills my father; and, for that,
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.
O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.
He took my father grossly,[4] full of bread;
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;
And how his audit stands, who knows save heaven!
But in our circumstance[5] and course of thought
'T is heavy with him: and am I then revenged,
To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?
No.
Up, sword; and know thou a more horrid hent:
When he is drunk, asleep, or in his rage;

[1] *Make assay.*] Make trial: Claudius says this to himself.

[2] *Now he is.*] Now that, or while, he is.

[3] *That would be scanned.*] That wants to be considered. This use of the verb *would* occurs in the quotation in Note 2, p. 95, and was formerly very common. It is frequent in Bacon's writings.

[4] *Grossly, &c.*] In the midst of worldly indulgence, unpurified by fasting and humiliation.

[5] *Circumstance.*] *Circumstance of thought* seems to mean conjecture.

Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed;
At gaming, swearing; or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in 't:—
Then trip him,[1] that his heels may kick at heaven;
And that his soul may be as damned and black
As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays:—
This physic[2] but prolongs thy sickly days. [*Exit.*

The KING *rises and advances.*

King. My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:
Words without thoughts never to heaven go. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.—*Another Room in the same.*

Enter QUEEN *and* POLONIUS.

Pol. He will come straight. Look you lay home to him:
Tell him, his pranks have been too broad to bear with,

[1] *Then trip him.*] Something more like Christianity than this occurs in Heywood's Woman Killed with Kindness, written before 1604:—

'But that I would not damn two precious souls,
Bought with my Saviour's blood, and send them laden
With all their scarlet sins upon their backs
Unto a fearful judgment, their two lives
Had met upon my rapier.'

But the horrid thought which Hamlet here indulges seems to have pleased the fancy of some other dramatists. In Machin's Dumb Knight, iii., the Duke of Epirus says to the King of Cyprus—

'You shall take them—
Even in their height of sin; then damn them both,
And let them sink before they ask God pardon,
That your revenge may stretch unto their souls.'

And similar malignity is expressed in Fletcher's Pilgrim, ii. 2.

[2] *This physic.*] This purging of thy soul.

And that your grace hath screened and stood between
Much heat and him. I'll silence me e'en here.
Pray you, be round with him.

Ham. [*Without.*] Mother! mother! mother!

Queen. I'll warrant you;
Fear me not:—withdraw, I hear him coming.

[POLONIUS *hides behind the arras.*

Enter HAMLET.

Ham. Now, mother; what 's the matter?

Queen. Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

Ham. Mother, you have my father much offended.

Queen. Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

Ham. Go, go, you question with an idle tongue.

Queen. Why, how now, Hamlet?

Ham. What 's the matter now?

Queen. Have you forgot me?

Ham. No, by the rood,[1] not so!
You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife;
And—would it were not so!—you are my mother.

Queen. Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.

Ham. Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge.
You go not, till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you.

Queen. What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?
Help, help, ho!

Pol. [*Behind.*] What, ho! help! help! help!

Ham. How now! a rat? [*Draws.*] Dead! for a ducat, dead!

[HAMLET *makes a pass through the arras.*

Pol. [*Behind.*] O I am slain. [*Falls and dies.*

[1] *The rood.*] The cross.

Queen. O me, what hast thou done?
Ham. Nay, I know not:
Is it the king?
[*Lifts up the arras and sees* POLONIUS.
Queen. O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!
Ham. A bloody deed;—almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.
Queen. *As kill a king!*
Ham. Ay, lady, 't was my word.—
Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell! [*To* POL.
I took thee for thy betters; take thy fortune:
Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.—
Leave wringing of your hands: Peace, sit you down,
And let me wring your heart: for so I shall,
If it be made of penetrable stuff:
If damned custom have not brazed it so,
That it is proof and bulwark against sense.
Queen. What have I done, that thou dar'st wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?
Ham. Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty;
Calls virtue hypocrite; takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there; makes marriage vows
As false as dicers' oaths: O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction[1] plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words! Heaven's face doth glow;
Yea, this solidity[2] and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act.

[1] *Contraction.*] Vowed engagement: contract of marriage.
[2] *This solidity.*] This solid globe, the earth.

Queen. Ay me, what act,
That roars so loud and thunders in the index?[1]
Ham. Look here, upon this picture, and on this,—
The counterfeit presentment[2] of two brothers.
See what a grace was seated on this brow:
Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
A combination and a form, indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man:
This was your husband.—Look you now, what follows:
Here is your husband; like a mildewed ear
Blasting his wholesome brother.—Have you eyes?
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?
You cannot call it love; for at your age
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it 's humble,
And waits upon the judgment: and what judgment
Would step from this to this? Sense, sure, you have,
Else could you not have motion: but sure, that sense
Is apoplexed: for madness would not err;
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thralled
But it reserved some quantity of choice,
To serve in such a difference. What devil was 't
That thus hath cozened you at hoodman-blind?[3]
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,

[1] *The index.*] The harbinger: an allusion, perhaps, to prodigies preceding dire events, like an index preceding a book.
[2] *Counterfeit presentment.*] Copied representation.
[3] *Hoodman blind.*] This probably corresponds to what we now call blindman's buff.

Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope.
O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,
And melt in her own fire: proclaim no shame
When the compulsive ardour gives the charge;
Since frost itself as actively doth burn,
And reason panders will.

Queen. O Hamlet, speak no more:
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul;
And there I see such black and grained spots,
As will not leave their tinct.[1]

Ham. Nay, but to live
In the rank sweat of an enseamed[2] bed;
Stewed in corruption: honeying and making love
Over the nasty sty,—

Queen. O, speak to me no more!
These words like daggers enter in mine ears;
No more, sweet Hamlet!

Ham. A murderer and a villain!
A slave, that is not twentieth part the tithe
Of your precedent lord:—a vice of kings![3]
A cutpurse[4] of the empire and the rule,
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,
And put it in his pocket!

Queen. No more!

[1] *Leave their tinct.*] *To leave*, here means *to lose, to part with.*

[2] *Enseamed.*] Greasy. *Seam* is fat or grease.

[3] *A vice of kings.*] The *Vice* was a character in the old Moralities—a sort of buffoon or clown, sometimes wearing a coat 'of shreds and patches.'

[4] *Cutpurse.*] Purses used to be hung at the girdle.

Enter GHOST.

Ham. A king of shreds and patches!—
Save me, and hover o'er me with your wings,
You heavenly guards!—What would you, gracious figure?
Queen. Alas! he 's mad.
Ham. Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by
The important acting of your dread command?
O, say!
Ghost. Do not forget: This visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
But, look! amazement on thy mother sits:
O, step between her and her fighting soul,—
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works,—
Speak to her, Hamlet.
Ham. How is it with you, lady?
Queen. Alas, how is 't with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy,
And with the incorporal air do hold discourse?
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep;
And, as the sleeping soldiers in the alarm,
Your bedded hair, like life in excrements,[1]
Starts up, and stands on end. O gentle son,
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper
Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?
Ham. On him! on him!—Look you, how pale he glares!
His form and cause conjoined preaching to stones

[1] *Excrements.*] The hair was often so called. The hair and beard are called by Fuller 'ornamental excrements.' Profane State, 18; and Bassanio, in the Merchant of Venice, calls the beard 'valour's excrement.'

Would make them capable.[1]—Do not look upon me;
Lest with this piteous action you convert
My stern effects: then what I have to do
Will want true colour; tears, perchance, for blood.

Queen. To whom do you speak this?

Ham. Do you see nothing there?

Queen. Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.

Ham. Nor did you nothing hear?

Queen. No, nothing, but ourselves.

Ham. Why, look you there! look how it steals away!
My father, in his habit as he lived![2]
Look, where he goes, even now, out at the portal!

[*Exit* GHOST.

Queen. This is the very coinage of your brain:
This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.

Ham. *Ecstasy!*
My pulse as yours does temperately keep time,
And makes as healthful music: It is not madness
That I have uttered: bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word, which madness

[1] *Capable.*] Susceptible, sensible.

[2] *In his habit, &c.*] 'It is a stupid error,' says Dr. Bucknill, 'to put the Ghost on the stage clad in armour on this second occasion. "My father, in his habit as he lived," indicates that this time the design of the poet was to represent him in the weeds of peace. The quarto edition, indeed, gives as a stage direction, "Enter the Ghost in his night-gown." The appearance is suited to the place, even as the cap-a-pie armour to the place of warlike guard. Unlike the appearance on the battery, which is seen by all who were present, on this occasion it is only visible to Hamlet. Ghosts were supposed to have the power to make themselves visible and invisible to whom they chose; and the dramatic effect of the Queen's surprise at Hamlet's behaviour was well worth the poetic exercise of the privilege.' Psych. of Shaksp.

Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,
That not your trespass but my madness speaks:
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place;
Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven;
Repent what 's past: avoid what is to come;
And do not spread the compost o'er the weeds,
To make them ranker. [*Aside.*] Forgive me this, my virtue;[1]
For in the fatness of these pursy times,
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg;
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

Queen. O Hamlet! thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

Ham. O throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.
Good night: but go not to mine uncle's bed;
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
That monster, Custom,[2] who all sense doth eat—
Oft habit's devil—is angel yet in this,—
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery,
That aptly is put on: Refrain to-night:
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence: the next more easy;
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And master the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency. Once more, good night:
And when you are desirous to be blessed,

[1] *My virtue.*] This, as Staunton justly observes, is Hamlet's 'imploration to his own virtue.'

[2] *That monster, Custom.*] Custom begets unconsciousness of that evil spirit by which a sinful person is actuated in habit, and is here, therefore, likened to a monster that devours the sense.

I 'll blessing beg of you.—For this same lord,
[*Pointing to* POLONIUS.
I do repent. But heaven hath pleased it so,
To punish me with this, and this with me,
That I must be their scourge and minister.
I will bestow him, and will answer well
The death I gave him. So again, good night!
(I must be cruel, only to be kind:)
Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind.—
One word more, good lady.

Queen. What shall I do?

Ham. Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:—
Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed;
Pinch wanton on your cheek; call you his mouse;[1]
And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,
Or paddling in your neck with his damned fingers,
Make you to ravel all this matter out,
That I essentially am not in madness,
But mad in craft. 'T were good you let him know:
For who, that 's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,
Would from a paddock,[2] from a bat, a gib,
Such dear concernings hide? who would do so?
No, in despite of sense and secrecy,
Unpeg the basket[3] on the house's top,

[1] *His mouse.*] This was a term of endearment. In Middleton's Roaring Girl, Gallipot says to his wife, 'Why, mouse, thy mind is nibbling at something;' and Openwork says to his wife, 'Is the countess's smock almost done, mouse?'

[2] *A paddock, &c.*] Hamlet calls his uncle a *paddock*, i.e., a 'toad, ugly and venomous'—a *bat*, a sort of non-descript, half beast, half bird, that hates the light—a *gib*, or tom-cat, a treacherous animal that prowls in the dark.

[3] *Unpeg the basket, &c.*] Let out my mystery, and thereby endanger your own life. *To try conclusions* is to try experiments. 'God help them that have neither ability to help nor wit to pity

Let the birds fly, and, like the famous ape,
To try conclusions, in the basket creep,
And break your own neck down.

Queen. Be thou assured if words be made of breath,
And breath of life, I have no life to breathe
What thou hast said to me.

Ham. I must to England; you know that?

Queen. Alack,
I had forgot 't is so concluded on.

Ham. There 's letters sealed: and my two school-fellows,—
Whom I will trust, as I will adders fanged,—
They bear the mandate; they must sweep my way,
And marshal me to knavery: Let it work,
For 't is the sport to have the engineer
Hoist[1] with his own petar: and 't shall go hard,
But I will delve one yard below their mines,
And blow them at the moon: O, 't is most sweet,
When in one line two crafts directly meet.—
This man[2] shall set me packing.
I 'll lug the guts into the neighbour room:—
Mother, good night.—Indeed, this counsellor
Is now most still, most secret, and most grave,
Who was in life a foolish prating knave.
Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you.—
Good night, mother.

[*Exeunt severally;* HAMLET *dragging out the body of* POLONIUS.

themselves, but will needs try conclusions between their heads and the next wall.' Gabriel Harvey's 3rd Letter.

[1] *Hoist.*] For *hoised*, or hoisted.

[2] *This man.*] Polonius.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The same.*

Enter KING *and* QUEEN.

King. There 's matter in these sighs—these profound heaves—
You must translate: 't is fit we understand them:
Where is your son?
Queen. Ah, my good lord, what have I seen to-night!
King. What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?
Queen. Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend
Which is the mightier: In his lawless fit,
Behind the arras hearing something stir,
He whips his rapier out, and cries, *A rat! a rat!*
And, in this brainish apprehension, kills
The unseen good old man.
King. O heavy deed!
It had been so with us, had we been there:
His liberty is full of threats to all,
To you yourself, to us, to every one.
Alas! how shall this bloody deed be answered?
It will be laid to us, whose providence
Should have kept short, restrained, and out of haunt,[1]
This mad young man: but so much was our love,
We would not understand what was most fit;
But, like the owner of a foul disease,

[1] *Out of haunt.*] Out of company; away from places of resort.

To keep it from divulging, let it feed
Even on the pith of life. Where is he gone?
Queen. To draw apart the body he hath killed,
O'er whom his very madness, like some ore
Among a mineral of metals base,[1]
Shows itself pure; he weeps for what is done.
King. O, Gertrude, come away!
The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch,
But we will ship him hence: and this vile deed,
We must, with all our majesty and skill,
Both countenance and excuse.—Ho! Guildenstern!

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Friends both, go join you with some further aid:
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,
And from his mother's closet hath he dragged him:
Go, seek him out; speak fair,[2] and bring the body
Into the chapel. I pray you, haste in this.

[*Exeunt* ROS. *and* GUIL.

Come, Gertrude, we 'll call up our wisest friends;
And let them know, both what we mean to do,
And what 's untimely done: so, haply, slander,
Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter,
As level as the cannon to his blank,[3]
Transports his poisoned shot, may miss our name,
And hit the woundless air. O come away!
My soul is full of discord and dismay. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Another Room in the same.*

Enter HAMLET.

Ham. Safely stowed—

[1] *Ore among a mineral.*] Gold in a mineral mass.
[2] *Fair.*] Gently, softly.
[3] *Blank.*] Originally a white mark in the centre of a butt, at which aim was taken.

Ros. &c. without. Hamlet! lord Hamlet!

Ham. What noise? who calls on Hamlet? O, here they come.

Enter ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN.

Ros. What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

Ham. Compounded it with dust,[1] whereto 't is kin.

Ros. Tell us where 't is; that we may take it thence,
And bear it to the chapel.

Ham. Do not believe it.

Ros. Believe what?

Ham. That I can keep your counsel, and not mine own. Besides, to be demanded of a sponge!—what replication should be made by the son of a king?

Ros. Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

Ham. Ay, sir; that soaks up the king's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the king best service in the end: He keeps them, like an ape doth nuts, in the corner of his jaw; first mouthed, to be last swallowed: When he needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again.

Ros. I understand you not, my lord.

Ham. I am glad of it: A knavish speech sleeps[2] in a foolish ear.

Ros. My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the king.

Ham. The body is with the king,[3] but the king is not with the body. The king is a thing—

[1] *Compounded, &c.*] So in 2 K. Henry IV. iv. 4, 'Compound me with forgotten dust.'

[2] *Sleeps, &c.*] Is in no danger of being told.

[3] *The body is with the king, &c.*] The body is still in the king's house, but the king is *not yet* with the body, i.e. not yet numbered with the dead.

Guil. *A thing*, my lord?

Ham. Of nothing:[1] bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after.[2] [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*Another Room in the same.*

Enter KING, *attended.*

King. I have sent to seek him, and to find the body.
How dangerous is it that this man goes loose;
Yet must not we put the strong law on him:
He 's loved of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgment, but their eyes;
And where 't is so, the offender's scourge is weighed,
But never the offence. To bear all smooth and even,
This sudden sending him away must seem
Deliberate pause: Diseases desperate grown,
By desperate appliance are relieved,

Enter ROSENCRANTZ.

Or not at all.—How now? what hath befallen?

Ros. Where the dead body is bestowed, my lord,
We cannot get from him.

King. But where is he?

Ros. Without, my lord, guarded, to know your pleasure.

King. Bring him before us.

Ros. Ho, Guildenstern! bring in my lord.

[1] *Of nothing.*] Hamlet here, perhaps, merely means that he will say no more about the thing.

[2] *Hide fox, &c.*] *Hide fox, and all* [have, or follow] *after*, was the name of a game, now called *Hide and seek.* Hamlet refers to Polonius being hid, and, as it were, hunted for.

Enter HAMLET *and* GUILDENSTERN.

King. Now, Hamlet, where 's Polonius?

Ham. At supper.

King. At supper? Where?

Ham. Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else, to fat us; and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king, and your lean beggar, is but variable service; two dishes, but to one table; that 's the end.

King. Alas, alas!

Ham. A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king; and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

King. What dost thou mean by this?

Ham. Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress[1] through the guts of a beggar.

King. Where is Polonius?

Ham. In heaven: send thither to see; if your messenger find him not there, seek him i' the other place yourself. But, indeed, if you find him not this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

King. Go seek him there. [*To some* Attendants.

Ham. He will stay till you come. [*Ex.* Attendants.

King. Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,—
Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve
For that which thou hast done,—must send thee hence
With fiery quickness: Therefore, prepare thyself;
The bark is ready, and the wind at help,
The associates tend,[2] and everything is bent
For England.

[1] *A progress.*] Alluding to the occasional 'progresses' of sovereigns through their dominions.

[2] *Tend.*] Attend or wait.

Ham. For England?

King. Ay, Hamlet.

Ham. Good.

King. So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.

Ham. I see a cherub that sees them.—But come; for England!—Farewell, dear mother.

King. Thy loving father, Hamlet.

Ham. My mother: Father and mother is man and wife; man and wife is one flesh; and so, *my mother.* Come, for England! [*Exit.*

King. Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard,
Delay it not; I 'll have him hence to-night:
Away! for everything is sealed and done
That else leans on the affair: Pray you, make haste.
[*Exeunt* Ros. *and* Guil.
And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught,
(As my great power thereof may give thee sense;
Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red
After the Danish sword, and thy free awe
Pays homage to us,) thou may'st not coldly set
Our sovereign process; which imports at full,
By letters conjuring to that effect,
The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England;
For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me: Till I know 't is done,
Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.—*A Plain in* Denmark.

Enter Fortinbras, *and* Forces *marching.*

For. Go, captain, from me greet the Danish king;
Tell him, that by his licence, Fortinbras
Claims the conveyance of a promised march
Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous.

If that his majesty would aught with us,
We shall express our duty in his eye:[1]
And let him know so.
Cap. I will do 't, my lord.
For. Go softly on. [*Exeunt* FOR. *and* Forces.

Enter HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, &c.

Ham. Good sir, whose powers are these?
Cap. They are of Norway, sir.
Ham. How purposed, sir,
I pray you?
Cap. Against some part of Poland.
Ham. Who commands them, sir?
Cap. The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.
Ham. Goes it against the main of Poland, sir,
Or for some frontier?
Cap. Truly to speak, and with no addition,
We go to gain a little patch of ground,
That hath in it no profit but the name.
To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it;
Nor will it yield to Norway, or the Pole.
A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.
Ham. Why, then the Polack never will defend it.
Cap. Yes, 't is already garrisoned.
Ham. Two thousand souls, and twenty thousand ducats,
Will not debate the question of this straw:
This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace,
That inward breaks, and shows no cause without
Why the man dies.—I humbly thank you, sir.
Cap. God be wi' you, sir. [*Exit* Captain.
Ros. Will 't please you go, my lord?

[1] *In his eye, &c.*] In his sight or presence, and do you inform him so.

Ham. I will be with you straight. Go a little before.
[*Exeunt* Ros. *and* Guil.

How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,
If his chief good, and market of his time,
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.
Sure, He that made us with such large discourse,[1]
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on the event,—
A thought which, quartered, hath but one part wisdom,
And ever three parts coward,—I do not know
Why yet I live to say, *This thing 's to do;*
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means,
To do 't. Examples gross as earth exhort me:
Witness this army of such mass and charge,
Led by a delicate and tender prince;
Whose spirit, with divine ambition puffed,
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,
Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great,
Is—not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw,
When honour 's at the stake. How stand I, then,
That have—a father killed, a mother stained,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds; fight for a plot

[1] *Such large discourse.*] *See* Note 8, p. 19.

Whereon the numbers cannot try[1] the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain?—O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!

[*Exit.*

SCENE V.—Elsinore. *A Room in the Castle*

Enter QUEEN *and* HORATIO.

Queen. I will not speak with her.
Hor. She is importunate; indeed, distract;
Her mood will needs be pitied.
Queen. What would she have?
Hor. She speaks much of her father; says, she hears
There's tricks i' the world; and hems, and beats her heart;
Spurns enviously at straws; speaks things in doubt,
That carry but half sense: her speech is nothing,
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to collection;[2] they aim at it,
And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts;
Which,[3] as her winks, and nods, and gestures yield them,
Indeed would make one think there would be thought,
Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.
'T were good she were spoken with; for she may strew
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.
Queen. Let her come in. [*Exit* HORATIO.
To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss:
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,
It spills itself, in fearing to be spilt.

[1] *Cannot try.*] Cannot be contained that are to try.
[2] *Collection.*] Conjecture.
[3] *Which.*] Which words.

Re-enter HORATIO *with* OPHELIA.

Oph. Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?
Queen. How now, Ophelia?

Oph. [sings] *How should I your true love know*
From another one?
By his cockle hat[1] *and staff,*
And his sandal shoon.

Queen. Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?
Oph. Say you? nay, pray you, mark:—

He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.

Queen. Nay, but Ophelia,—
Oph. Pray you, mark:—

White his shroud as the mountain snow.

Enter KING.

Queen. Alas! look here, my lord.

Oph. *Larded with sweet flowers;*
Which bewept to the grave did go,
With true-love showers.

King. How do you, pretty lady?
Oph. Well, God 'ield you![2] They say, the owl[3] was a

[1] *Cockle hat.*] A cockle or scallop shell worn in front of the hat was the badge of a pilgrim who had been in Palestine.

'But our soft beaver fells we have turned to iron,
Our gowns to armour, and our *shells* to plumes.'
Heywood's Four Prentices of London.

[2] *God 'ield you.*] A common phrase in our ancient dramas, meaning—God yield or reward you.

[3] *The owl, &c.*] The sad transformation that has taken place in Ophelia herself, and in the things that were dear to her, is the

baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table!

King. Conceit upon her father.

Oph. Pray you, let us have no words of this; but when they ask you what it means, say you this:

> *To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day*
> *All in the morning betime,*
> *And I a maid at your window,*
> *To be your Valentine:*
>
> *Then up he rose, and donned his clothes,*
> *And dupped*[1] *the chamber-door;*
> *Let in the maid, that out a maid*
> *Never departed more.*

King. Pretty Ophelia!

Oph. Indeed, la, without an oath, I'll make an end on't:

> *By Gis,*[2] *and by Saint Charity,*
> *Alack, and fie for shame!*

King. How long has she been thus?

Oph. I hope all will be well. We must be patient: but I cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him i' the cold ground: My brother shall know of it, and

prompting idea of this speech. There was a tradition that the Saviour once asked some bread of a baker, who, proceeding to comply with the request, put in the oven a piece of dough to bake, but was rebuked by his daughter for so doing; and she for her want of charity was punished by being transformed into an owl.

[1] *Donned—dupped.*] The verbs *don* and *doff* were used for *do on* and *do off*; and perhaps *dup* and *dout* were similar contractions for *do up* and *do out*. 'We must do on the armour of God,' Latimer, Serm. for 21st Sunday after Trin.

[2] *By Gis, &c.*] No saint's name has been found corresponding to *Gis*, which, therefore, is probably a corrupted contraction of *Jesus*. *St. Charity* is often referred to. 'By Gys, master, I am not sick,' Gammer Gurton's Needle, iv. 1. 'Ah, dear lord, and sweet saint Charity,' Spenser, Eglogues, 5, 255.

so I thank you for your good counsel.—Come, my coach!
Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night,
good night. [*Exit.*

King. Follow her close; give her good watch, I pray
you. [*Exit* HORATIO.

O! this is the poison of deep grief; it springs
All from her father's death: O Gertrude, Gertrude,
When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalias! First, her father slain;
Next, your son gone; and he most violent author
Of his own just remove; the people muddied,
Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers,
For good Polonius' death; and we have done but greenly,
In hugger-mugger[1] to inter him; poor Ophelia,
Divided from herself and her fair judgment,
Without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts;
Last, and as much containing as all these,
Her brother is in secret come from France:
Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
With pestilent speeches of his father's death;
Wherein necessity, of matter beggared,
Will nothing stick our person to arraign

[1] *In hugger-mugger.*] In a hidden or stealthy way. 'Antonius thinking good his testament should be read openly, and also that his body should be honourably buried, and not in hugger-mugger,' &c. North's Plutarch, Brutus. 'The straggler shipping his cloth and other commodity in covert manner, hugger-mugger, and at obscure ports.' Wheeler's Treatise of Commerce (1601), p. 60. 'He died like a politician, in hugger-mugger, made no man acquainted with it.' Tourneur's Revenger's Tragedy, v. 'But you will to this gear in hugger-mugger.' Merry Devil of Edmonton. We find the expression also in Spenser's Mother Hubberd's Tale:—

'Of all the patrimony which a few
Now hold in hugger-mugger in their hand.'

In ear and ear, O my dear Gertrude, this,
Like to a murdering-piece, in many places
Gives me superfluous death.[1] [*A noise without.*

Queen. Alack! what noise is this?

Enter a Gentleman.

King. Where are my Switzers?[2] Let them guard the door:
What is the matter?

Gent. Save yourself, my lord!
The ocean, overpeering of his list,[3]
Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste,
Than young Laertes, in a riotous head,
O'erbears your officers. The rabble call him lord;
And as the world were now but to begin,
Antiquity forgot, custom not known,
The ratifiers and props of every word,
They cry, *Choose we! Laertes shall be king!*
Caps, hands, and tongues, applaud it to the clouds,
Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!

Queen. How cheerfully on the false trail they cry!
O, this is counter,[4] you false Danish dogs!

King. The doors are broke. [*Noise without.*

[1] *Superfluous death.*] Death by means more than would suffice to kill.

[2] *Switzers.*] This was a name often used to denote the body-guard of princes. 'Clerk to the great band of maribones, that people call the Switzers.' Fletcher's Noble Gentleman, iii. 1.

[3] *Overpeering of his list, &c.*] Overlooking its bound, &c. Compare 'He seemed, in running, to devour the way.' 2 K. Henry IV. i. 1.

[4] *This is counter.*] 'When a hound hunteth backwards the same way that the chase is come, then we say he hunteth *counter.*' Turberville's Book of Hunting. 'You hunt counter: hence! avaunt!' 2 K. Henry IV. i. 2.

Enter LAERTES, *armed;* Danes *following.*

Laer. Where is this king?—Sirs, stand you all without.

Danes. No, let 's come in.

Laer. I pray you, give me leave.

Danes. We will, we will.

[*They retire without the door.*

Laer. I thank you:—keep the door.—O thou vile king,
Give me my father!

Queen. Calmly, good Laertes.

Laer. That drop of blood that 's calm proclaims me bastard;
Cries cuckold to my father; brands the harlot
Even here, between the chaste unsmirched brow
Of my true mother.

King. What is the cause, Laertes,
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?—
Let him go, Gertrude; do not fear our person:
There 's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would,
Acts little of his will.—Tell me, Laertes,
Why thou art thus incensed;—Let him go, Gertrude;—
Speak, man.

Laer. Where is my father?

King. Dead.

Queen. But not by him.

King. Let him demand his fill.

Laer. How came he dead? I 'll not be juggled with:
To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!
Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
I dare damnation: To this point I stand—
That both the worlds I give to negligence,
Let come what comes; only I 'll be revenged
Most thoroughly for my father.

King. Who shall stay you?
Laer. My will, not all the world;
And, for my means, I 'll husband them so well,
They shall go far with little.
King. Good Laertes,
If you desire to know the certainty
Of your dear father's death, is 't writ in your revenge,
That, swoopstake, you will draw both friend and foe,
Winner and loser?
Laer. None but his enemies.
King. Will you know them, then?
Laer. To his good friends thus wide I 'll ope my arms;
And, like the kind life-rend'ring pelican,
Repast them with my blood.
King. Why, now you speak
Like a good child and a true gentleman.
That I am guiltless of your father's death,
And am most sensibly in grief for it,
It shall as level to your judgment pierce,
As day does to your eye.
Danes. [*Without.*] Let her come in.
Laer. How now! what noise is that?—

Enter OPHELIA, *fantastically dressed with straws and flowers.*

O heat, dry up my brains! tears seven times salt
Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye!—
By heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight,
Till our scale turns the beam. O rose of May!
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!—
O heavens! is 't possible a young maid's wits
Should be as mortal as an old man's life?
Nature is fine[1] in love: and where 't is fine,

[1] *Fine.*] Pure, without any alloy of selfishness.

It sends some precious instance of itself
After the thing it loves.

Oph. *They bore him barefaced on the bier;*
Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny;
And on his grave rains many a tear;—

Fare you well, my dove!

Laer. Had'st thou thy wits, and didst persuade revenge,
It could not move thus.

Oph. You must sing, *A-down a-down, an you call him a-down-a.* O, how the wheel becomes it![1] It is the false steward, that stole his master's daughter.

Laer. This nothing's more than matter.

Oph. There's rosemary,[2] that's for remembrance; pray, love, remember: and there is pansies,[3] that's for thoughts.

Laer. A document in madness; thoughts and remembrance fitted.

Oph. There's fennel for you, and columbines:—there's rue for you; and here's some for me:—we may call it herb-grace[4] o' Sundays:—O, you must wear your rue

[1] *How the wheel becomes it!*] How well the rota or burden of the song becomes it.

[2] *Rosemary.*] *Rosemary* was anciently supposed to possess a virtue which strengthened the memory, and it was therefore distributed at marriages and funerals. 'The rosemary that was washed in sweet water to set out the bridal, is now wet in tears to furnish her burial.' Dekkar's Wonderful Year. 'Let's dip our rosemaries in one rich bowl of sack to this brave girl.' Mayne's City Match, v. 1.

[3] *Pansies.*] The word is from the French—*pensées*, thoughts.

[4] *Herb-grace.*] Ophelia gives the fennel and columbines to the king—plants respectively denoting lust and ingratitude; the rue, or herb of sorrow, she appropriates to the queen and herself, remarking that this plant may be worn with *a difference*, by which she means that it may be sometimes used as an emblem of penitential sorrow:—

'Here did she fall a tear; here, in this place,
I'll set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace.' K. Richard II. iii. 4.

with a difference.—There 's a daisy:—I would give you some violets; but they withered all when my father died:—They say he made a good end,—

For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy,—

Laer. Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself
She turns to favour and to prettiness.

Oph. And will he not come again?
And will he not come again?
No, no, he is dead,
Go to thy death-bed,
He never will come again.

His beard as white as snow,
All flaxen was his poll:
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan:
Gramercy[1] *on his soul!*

And of all christian souls, I pray God.—God be wi' you!
[*Exit* OPHELIA.

Laer. Do you see this, O God?

King. Laertes, I must commune with your grief
Or you deny me right. Go but apart,
Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,
And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me:
If by direct or by collateral hand
They find us touched, we will our kingdom give,
Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours,
To you in satisfaction; but if not,
Be you content to lend your patience to us,
And we shall jointly labour with your soul
To give it due content.

[1] *Gramercy.*] The second quarto has *God 'a mercy.* The word *gramercy* (Fr. *grand merci*) means *thanks*, and is here used with an impropriety not uncommon in old ballads.

Laer. Let this be so;
His means of death, his obscure burial—
No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,
No noble rite, nor formal ostentation,—
Cry to be heard, as 't were from heaven to earth,
That I must call 't in question.

King. So you shall;
And, where the offence is, let the great axe fall.
I pray you, go with me. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.—*Another Room in the same.*

Enter HORATIO *and a* Servant.

Hor. What are they that would speak with me?

Serv. Sailors, sir; they say they have letters for you.

Hor. Let them come in.—

[*Exit* Servant.

I do not know from what part of the world
I should be greeted, if not from lord Hamlet.

Enter Sailors.

1 *Sail.* God bless you, sir!

Hor. Let him bless thee too.

1 *Sail.* He shall, sir, an 't please him. There's a letter for you, sir,—it comes from the ambassador that was bound for England,—if your name be Horatio, as I am let to know it is.

Hor. [Reads.] *Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked this, give these fellows some means to the king; they have letters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chace: Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour; in the grapple I boarded them: on the instant, they got clear of our ship; so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy; but they knew what they did; I am to do a good turn for them. Let the king have the letters*

I have sent; and repair thou to me with as much haste as thou wouldst fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear, will make thee dumb; yet are they much too light for the bore of the matter. These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz *and* Guildenstern *hold their course for England; of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell. He that thou knowest thine,*

HAMLET.

Come, I will give you way for these your letters;
And do 't the speedier, that you may direct me
To him from whom you brought them. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII.—*Another Room in the same.*

Enter KING *and* LAERTES.

King. Now must your conscience my acquittance seal,
And you must put me in your heart for friend;
Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear,
That he which hath your noble father slain,
Pursued my life.

Laer. It well appears:—But tell me,
Why you proceeded not against these feats,
So crimeful and so capital in nature,
As by your safety, wisdom, all things else,
You mainly were stirred up.

King. O, for two special reasons;
Which may to you, perhaps, seem much unsinewed,
And yet to me they are strong. The queen, his mother,
Lives almost by his looks; and for myself,
(My virtue, or my plague, be it either which,)
She 's so conjunctive to my life and soul,
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,
I could not but by her. The other motive,
Why to a public count I might not go,
Is the great love the general gender[1] bear him:

[1] *The general gender.*] The common people.

Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,
Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,
Convert his gyves to graces; so that my arrows,
Too slightly timbered for so loud a wind,
Would have reverted to my bow again,
And not where I had aimed them.

Laer. And so have I a noble father lost;
A sister driven into desperate terms,—
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,
Stood challenger on mount of all the age
For her perfections:—But my revenge will come.

King. Break not your sleeps for that: you must not think
That we are made of stuff so flat and dull,
That we can let our beard be shook with danger,
And think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more:
I loved your father, and we love ourself;
And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine,—
How now! what news?

Enter a Messenger.

Mess. Letters, my lord, from Hamlet:
This to your majesty; this to the queen.

King. From Hamlet! Who brought them?

Mess. Sailors, my lord, they say: I saw them not.
They were given to me by Claudio, he received them.

King. Laertes, you shall hear them:—Leave us.

[*Exit* Messenger.

[Reads.] *High and mighty, You shall know, I am set naked on your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes: when I shall, first asking your pardon thereunto, recount the occasions of my sudden and more strange return.* *HAMLET.*

What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?
Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

Laer. Know you the hand?

King. 'T is Hamlet's character.—*Naked,*—
And, in a postscript here, he says, *alone:*
Can you advise me?

Laer. I am lost in it, my lord. But let him come:
It warms the very sickness in my heart,
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,
Thus diddest thou!

King. If it be so, Laertes,—
As how should it be so? how otherwise?—
Will you be ruled by me?

Laer. If so you 'll not o'errule me to a peace.

King. To thine own peace. If he be now returned,—
As checking[1] at his voyage, and that he means
No more to undertake it,—I will work him
To an exploit, now ripe in my device,
Under the which he shall not choose but fall;
And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe;
But even his mother shall uncharge the practice,[2]
And call it accident.

Laer. My lord, I will be ruled;
The rather, if you could devise it so,
That I might be the organ.

King. It falls right.
You have been talked of since your travel much,
And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality
Wherein, they say, you shine: your sum of parts
Did not together pluck such envy from him,
As did that one; and that, in my regard,
Of the unworthiest siege.[3]

[1] *Checking.*] A term in falconry applied when a hawk stopped and turned away from his proper pursuit. 'Nor must I check at his commands for any private motives.' Massinger's Great Duke of Florence, i. 2.

[2] *Uncharge the practice.*] Say there was no design.

[3] *Siege.*] Rank, seat. 'I fetch my life and being from men of

Laer. What part is that, my lord?
King. A very riband in the cap of youth,
Yet needful too; for youth no less becomes
The light and careless livery that it wears,
Than settled age his sables and his weeds,
Importing health and graveness.—Two months since,
Here was a gentleman of Normandy,—
I have seen myself, and served against, the French,
And they can well on horseback: but this gallant
Had witchcraft in 't: he grew into his seat;
And to such wondrous doing brought his horse,
As he had been incorpsed and demi-natured
With the brave beast: so far he topped[1] my thought,
That I, in forgery of shapes and tricks,
Come short of what he did.
Laer. A Norman was 't?
King. A Norman.
Laer. Upon my life, Lamond.
King. The very same.
Laer. I know him well: he is the brooch,[2] indeed,
And gem of all the nation.
King. He made confession of you;
And gave you such a masterly report,
For art and exercise in your defence,
And for your rapier most especially,
That he cried out, 't would be a sight indeed,
If one could match you: the scrimers of their nation,
He swore, had neither motion, guard, nor eye,
If you opposed them: Sir, this report of his

royal siege.' Othello, i. 2. *Siege* properly means *seat*; and a royal siege was a royal chair or state.

[1] *So far he topped, &c.*] So far he exceeded my imagination, that I, in conceiving of all possible shapes and manœuvres, &c.

[2] *Brooch.*] *See* the Editor's *K. Richard II.* p. 116, note 1.

Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy,
That he could nothing do, but wish and beg
Your sudden coming o'er, to play with him.
Now, out of this,——

Laer. What out of this, my lord?

King. Laertes, was your father dear to you?
Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,
A face without a heart?

Laer. Why ask you this?

King. Not that I think you did not love your father;
But that I know love is begun by time;
And that I see, in passages of proof,[1]
Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.
There lives within the very flame of love
A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it;
And nothing is at a like goodness still;[2]
For goodness, growing to a plurisy,[3]
Dies in his own too-much: That we would do,
We should do when we would; for this *would* changes,
And hath abatements and delays as many,
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents;
And then this *should* is like a spendthrift sigh,[4]
That hurts by easing. But, to the quick o' the ulcer:—
Hamlet comes back: what would you undertake,
To show yourself your father's son in deed
More than in words?

[1] *Passages of proof.*] Occurrences of experience.

[2] *Still.*] Always, constantly.

[3] *A plurisy.*] An excess. This is from the Latin *plus*, and not to be confounded with *pleurisy*. Massinger (Unnatural Combat, iv. 1) borrowed Shakspeare's thought:—'Thy plurisy of goodness is thy ill.'

[4] *A spendthrift sigh, &c.*] Sighs are called *blood-drinking* and *blood-sucking* sighs in 2 K. Henry VI. iii. 2, and 3 K. Henry VI. v. 4; for anciently an idea prevailed that every sigh cost a drop of

Laer. To cut his throat i' the church.

King. No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize;
Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,
Will you do this, keep close within your chamber?
Hamlet, returned, shall know you are come home:
We 'll put on those shall praise your excellence,
And set a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gave you; bring you, in fine, together,
And wager on your heads: he, being remiss,
Most generous, and free from all contriving,
Will not peruse the foils; so that with ease,
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
A sword unbated,[1] and, in a pass of practice,[2]
Requite him for your father.

Laer. I will do 't:
And, for that purpose, I 'll anoint my sword.
I bought an unction of a mountebank,
So mortal, that but dip a knife in it,
Where it draws blood, no cataplasm so rare,
Collected from all simples[3] that have virtue
Under the moon, can save the thing from death
That is but scratched withal: I 'll touch my point
With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,
It may be death.

King. Let 's further think of this;
Weigh what convenience, both of time and means,
May fit us to our shape: if this should fail,

blood. 'Sighs of love that cost the fresh blood dear.' Midsummer Night's Dream, iii. 2.

[1] *Unbated.*] Not blunted by having a button on the point like the common foils. *Unrebated* was the more usual word.

[2] *Pass of practice.*] A cunningly-designed thrust.

[3] *Simples, &c.*] Plants that have magic virtue when gathered by moonlight.

And that our drift[1] look through our bad performance,
'T were better not assayed; therefore this project
Should have a back, or second, that might hold,
If this should blast in proof.[2] Soft:—let me see:—
We 'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings,—
I ha 't!
When in your motion you are hot and dry,
(As make your bouts more violent to that end,)
And that he calls for drink, I 'll have prepared him
A chalice for the nonce; whereon but sipping,
If he by chance escape your venomed stuck,[3]
Our purpose may hold there.

Enter QUEEN.

How now, sweet queen?

Queen. One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow:—Your sister 's drowned, Laertes.

Laer. Drowned!—O, where?

Queen. There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
There, with fantastic garlands, did she come,
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples—
That liberal[4] shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead-men's-fingers call them—
There, on the pendant boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
When down the weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide,
And mermaid-like a while they bore her up:
Which time, she chanted snatches of old tunes,

[1] *Our drift, &c.*] Our design become transparent through our bad management.

[2] *Blast in proof.*] Explode in the attempt.

[3] *Stuck.*] Sword-point. Fr. *estoc.* [4] *Liberal.*] Licentious

As one incapable[1] of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element: but long it could not be,
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.

Laer. Alas! then, is she drowned?

Queen. Drowned, drowned!

Laer. Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears: But yet
It is our trick; nature her custom holds,
Let shame say what it will: when these are gone,[2]
The woman will be out.—Adieu, my lord!
I have a speech of fire that fain would blaze,
But that this folly douts it.[3] [*Exit.*

King. Let 's follow, Gertrude.
How much I had to do to calm his rage!
Now fear I this will give it start again;
Therefore let 's follow. [*Exeunt.*

[1] *Incapable.*] Unsusceptible, insensible.

[2] *When these are gone, &c.*] When these tears are gone, the woman will have gone out of me along with them.

[3] *This folly, &c.*] This silly weeping quenches it. *See* p. 120, note 1.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Churchyard.*

Enter two Clowns, *with spades, &c.*

1 *Clo.* Is she to be buried in christian burial that wilfully seeks her own salvation?

2 *Clo.* I tell thee she is; and therefore make her grave straight:[1] the crowner hath sat on her, and finds it christian burial.

1 *Clo.* How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

2 *Clo.* Why, 't is found so.

1 *Clo.* It must be *se offendendo;*[2] it cannot be else. For here lies the point: If I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act: and an act hath three branches; it is, to act, to do, and to perform: argal,[3] she drowned herself wittingly.

2 *Clo.* Nay, but hear you, goodman delver.—

1 *Clo.* Give me leave. Here lies the water; good: here stands the man; good: If the man go to this water, and drown himself, it is, will he nill he,[4] he goes; mark you that; but if the water come to him, and drown him, he

[1] *Straight.*] At once.

[2] *Se offendendo.*] By offending herself; that is, it cannot be in defence of herself, but by offence to herself.

[3] *Argal.*] The clown's corruption of *ergo.*

[4] *Will he nill he.*] Lat. *nolens volens. Nill* is a contraction for *ne will.* 'Such men should be witnesses—will they nill they.' Latimer's Sixth Sermon before K. Edward. 'Will I or nill I, it must be done.' Edwards' Damon and Pythias. 'For, will I nill I, so methinks I must.' Grim, the Collier of Croydon, iii.

drowns not himself: argal, he that is not guilty of his own death, shortens not his own life.

2 *Clo.* But is this law?

1 *Clo.* Ay, marry is 't; crowner's-quest law.[1]

2 *Clo.* Will you ha' the truth on 't? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out of christian burial.

1 *Clo.* Why, there thou say'st: and the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their even christian.[2] Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers; they hold up Adam's profession.

2 *Clo.* Was he a gentleman?

1 *Clo.* He was the first that ever bore arms.

2 *Clo.* Why, he had none.

1 *Clo.* What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the scripture? The scripture says, Adam digged: Could he dig without arms? I 'll put another question to thee: if thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself—

[1] *Crowner's-quest law.*] Sir John Hawkins says: 'I strongly suspect that this is a ridicule on the case of Dame Hales, reported by Plowden in his Commentaries, as determined in 3 Eliz. It seems her husband, Sir James Hales, had drowned himself in a river, and the question was, whether by this act a forfeiture of a lease from the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury, which he was possessed of, did not accrue to the Crown. The legal and logical subtleties arising in the course of the argument of this case, gave a very fair opportunity for a sneer at *crowner's-quest law.*' *See* some details in Staunton's Shakspeare, Illustrative Comment.

[2] *Even christian.*] Fellow-christian. 'The right faith abideth not in that man that is disposed purposely to sin, to hate his even christian,' &c., Latimer's Seventh Sermon on the Lord's Prayer. 'We are born into this world, not for our own sakes only, but for our even christian's sake.' Latimer's Sermon, 4th Sunday after Epiphany. The expression occurs several times in Chaucer's Parson's Tale.

2 *Clo.* Go to.

1 *Clo.* What is he, that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

2 *Clo.* The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

1 *Clo.* I like thy wit well, in good faith; the gallows does well: But how does it well? it does well to those that do ill: now thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church; argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To 't again; come.

2 *Clo.* Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?

1 *Clo.* Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.[1]

2 *Clo.* Marry, now I can tell.—

1 *Clo.* To 't.

2 *Clo.* Mass, I cannot tell.

Enter HAMLET *and* HORATIO *at a distance.*

1 *Clo.* Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating: and when you are asked this question next, say *a grave-maker*: the houses that he makes last till doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan;[2] fetch me a stoup of liquor. [*Exit* 2 Clown.

1 Clown *digs, and sings.*

In youth, when I did love, did love,[3]
Methought it was very sweet,

[1] *Unyoke.*] Unyoke the heifer; end your task. I suppose here an allusion to Judg. xiv. 18, 'If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle.'

[2] *Yaughan.*] What this word denotes has not been ascertained; it may mean, perhaps, *Yohan's* or *John's.*—'Here's a slave about the town here, a Jew, one *Yohan.*' B. Jonson's Every Man out of his Humour, v. 6.

[3] *In youth, when I did love.*] The grave-digger's song is taken from three stanzas of a barbarous version of a poem by Sir Thomas

To contract, O, *the time, for,* ah, *my behove,*
O, *methought there was nothing meet.*

Ham. Hath this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making!

Hor. Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

Ham. 'T is e'en so: the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

1 Clo. *But age, with his stealing steps,*
Hath caught me in his clutch,
And hath shipped me intill the land,
As if I had never been such. [*Throws up a skull.*

Ham. That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once: How the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jawbone, that did the first murder! It might be the

Vaux (not, as once supposed, by his father, Sir Nicholas). They are given nearly as follows in Percy's Reliques:—

'I loathe that I did love,
In youth that I thought sweet;
As time requires, for my behove
Methinks they are not meet.

* * * * *

For Age, with stealing steps,
Hath clawed me with his crutch,
And lusty Youth, away he leaps,
As there had been none such.

* * * * *

A pickaxe and a spade,
And eke a shrouding sheet,
A house of clay for to be made,
For such a guest most meet.'

Probably Shakspeare intended the clown to make a blundering version. The word *that* in the first and second lines is for *what:* I loathe what I did love, what in youth I thought sweet, &c. The interjections *O!* and *ah!* are interruptions expressive of the clown's exertions in handling his tools.

pate of a politician which this ass o'erreaches; one that could circumvent God, might it not?

Hor. It might, my lord.

Ham. Or of a courtier; which could say, *Good-morrow, sweet lord! How dost thou, good lord?* This might be my lord Such-a-one, that praised my lord Such-a-one's horse, when he meant to beg it, might it not?

Hor. Ay, my lord.

Ham. Why, e'en so: and now my lady Worm's: chapless, and knocked about the mazzard with a sexton's spade: Here 's a fine revolution, if we had the trick to see 't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats[1] with them? mine ache to think on 't.

1 Clo. *A pickaxe, and a spade, a spade,*
For—and a shrouding sheet:
O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet. [*Throws up a skull.*

Ham. There's another! Why might not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddits now, his quillets,[2] his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? Why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery? Humph! This fellow might be in 's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries: Is this the fine[3] of his

[1] *Loggats.*] An ancient game, something like nine-pins.

[2] *His quiddits—his quillets.*] *Quiddits* are subtleties; *quillets* are cunning shifts. 'What trick, what quiddit is this?' Barry's Ram Alley, v. 'He [the Pettifogger] makes his will in form of a law-case, full of quiddits.' Overbury's Characters. 'Nay, good Sir Throate, forbear your quillets now.' Ram Alley, i. 'He has his quirks and his quillets.' Every Woman in her Humour. So in Love's Labour 's Lost, iv. 3, 'Some tricks, some quillets, how to cheat the devil.'

[3] *The fine.*] The end.

fines and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? Will his vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The very conveyances of his lands will hardly lie in this box! and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha?

Hor. Not a jot more, my lord.

Ham. Is not parchment made of sheep-skins?

Hor. Ay, my lord, and of calves'-skins too.

Ham. They are sheep and calves that seek out assurance in that. I will speak to this fellow:—Whose grave 's this, sir?

1 *Clo.* Mine, sir.—

O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

Ham. I think it be thine, indeed; for thou liest in 't.

1 *Clo.* You lie out on 't, sir, and therefore it is not yours: for my part, I do not lie in 't, and yet it is mine.

Ham. Thou dost lie in 't, to be in 't, and say it is thine: 't is for the dead, not for the quick; therefore thou liest.

1 *Clo.* 'T is a quick lie, sir; 't will away again, from me to you.

Ham. What man dost thou dig it for?

1 *Clo.* For no man, sir.

Ham. What woman, then?

1 *Clo.* For none, neither.

Ham. Who is to be buried in 't?

1 *Clo.* One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul, she 's dead.

Ham. How absolute the knave is! we must speak by the card,[1] or equivocation will undo us. By the lord,

[1] *Speak by the card.*] The 'card or calendar of gentry,' or etiquette, was a book of rules for the direction of speech and behaviour. *See* Osric's allusion to it, p. 152.

Horatio, these three years I have taken note of it: the age is grown so picked,[1] that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe.—How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

1 *Clo.* Of all the days i' the year, I came to 't that day that our last king Hamlet o'ercame Fortinbras.

Ham. How long is that since?

1 *Clo.* Cannot you tell that? every fool can tell that: It was the very day that young Hamlet was born,—he that was mad, and sent into England.

Ham. Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?

1 *Clo.* Why, because he was mad: he shall recover his wits there: or, if he do not, it 's no great matter there.

Ham. Why?

1 *Clo.* 'T will not be seen in him; there the men are as mad as he.

Ham. How came he mad?

1 *Clo.* Very strangely, they say.

Ham. How strangely?

1 *Clo.* 'Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

Ham. Upon what ground?

1 *Clo.* Why, here in Denmark. I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

Ham. How long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot?

1 *Col.* 'Faith, if he be not rotten before he die, (as we have many pocky corses nowadays, that will scarce hold the laying in,) he will last you some eight year, or nine year: a tanner will last you nine year.

Ham. Why he more than another?

1 *Clo.* Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade, that he will keep out water a great while; and your water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body. Here's a

[1] *Picked.*] Particular, precise. So in Love's Labour's Lost, 1, 'He is too picked, too spruce, too affected.'

skull now: this skull has lain in the earth three-and-twenty years.

Ham. Whose was it?

1 *Clo.* A whoreson mad fellow's it was: Whose do you think it was?

Ham. Nay, I know not.

1 *Clo.* A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! 'a poured[1] a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir,—this same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester.

Ham. This?

1 *Clo.* E'en that.

Ham. Let me see.—Alas! poor Yorick!—I knew him, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: He hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chap-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour[3] she must come; make her laugh at that.—Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

Hor. What 's that, my lord?

Ham. Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth?

Hor. E'en so.

[1] *'A poured.*] *'A* for *he* is common in the old dramatists, and should be pronounced with the name-sound of the letter.

[2] *Jester.*] The original business of the jester, or gester, was to recite tales of *gestes* (Lat. *gesta*). 'Gestours for to tell tales.' Chaucer's Tale of Sir Thopas.

[3] *Favour.*] Countenance.

Ham. And smelt so? puh! [*Throws down the skull.*

Hor. E'en so, my lord.

Ham. To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

Hor. 'T were to consider too curiously, to consider so.

Ham. No, faith, not a jot, but to follow him thither with modesty[1] enough, and likelihood to lead it. As thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returned into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam: And why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperial Cæsar, dead, and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
O, that that earth which kept the world in awe,
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw!—

But soft! but soft! aside:—here comes the king.

Enter Priests, &c., *in procession; the corpse of* OPHELIA, LAERTES *and* Mourners *following;* KING, QUEEN, *their* Trains, &c.

The queen, the courtiers! Who is that they follow?
And with such maimed rites! This doth betoken,
The corse they follow did with desperate hand
Fordo its own life. 'T was of some estate:
Couch we a while, and mark. [*Retiring with* HOR.

Laer. What ceremony else?

Ham. That is Laertes,
A very noble youth: Mark.

Laer. What ceremony else?

1 *Priest.* Her obsequies have been as far enlarged
As we have warrantise: Her death was doubtful;

[1] *Modesty.*] Propriety.

And, but that great command o'ersways the order,[1]
She should in ground unsanctified have lodged
Till the last trumpet; for charitable prayers,
Shards, flints, and pebbles, should be thrown on her:
Yet here she is allowed her virgin crants,[2]
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home
Of bell and burial.

Laer. Must there no more be done?

1 *Priest.* *No more be done!*
We should profane the service of the dead,
To sing a requiem, and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls.

Laer. Lay her i' the earth;
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring!—I tell thee, churlish priest,
A minist'ring angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling.

Ham. What, the fair Ophelia!

Queen. Sweets to the sweet: Farewell!
[*Scattering flowers.*
I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife;
I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid,
And not t' have strewed thy grave.

Laer. O, treble woe
Fall ten times treble on that cursed head,
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense

[1] *The order.*] The ordained service; the ecclesiastical order.

[2] *Virgin crants, &c.*] *Crants* are wreaths or garlands. Sir T. Overbury says of the Fair and Happy Milkmaid, 'All her care is she may die in the springtime, to have store of flowers stuck upon her winding-sheet.' And Shirley, in the last speech of the Maid's Revenge, says, 'Strew, strew flowers enough upon them, for they were maids.'

Deprived thee of!—Hold off the earth a while,
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms:
[*Leaps into the grave.*
Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,
Till of this flat a mountain you have made,
To o'ertop old Pelion, or the skyish head
Of blue Olympus.
Ham. [*advancing.*] What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis? whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane! [*Leaps into the grave.*
Laer. The devil take thy soul!
[*Grappling with him.*
Ham. Thou prayest not well.
I prithee, take thy fingers from my throat;
For, though I am not splenetive and rash,
Yet have I something in me dangerous,
Which let thy wiseness fear: Away thy hand!
King. Pluck them asunder.
Queen. Hamlet, Hamlet!
Hor. Good my lord, be quiet.

[*The* Attendants *part them, and they come out of the grave.*]

Ham. Why, I will fight with him upon this theme,
Until my eyelids will no longer wag.
Queen. O my son! what theme?
Ham. I loved Ophelia; forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum.—What wilt thou do for her?
King. O he is mad, Laertes.
Queen. For love of God, forbear him!
Ham. Come, show me what thou 'lt do:
Woul't weep? woul't fight? woul't fast? woul't tear thyself?

Woul't drink up eisel ?[1] eat a crocodile ?
I 'll do 't.—Dost thou come here to whine ?
To outface me with leaping in her grave ?
Be buried quick with her, and so will I ;
And, if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
Make Ossa like a wart ! Nay, an thou 'lt mouth,
I 'll rant as well as thou.

Queen. This is mere madness :
And thus a while the fit will work on him ;
Anon, as patient as the female dove,
When that her golden couplets[2] are disclosed,
His silence will sit drooping.

Ham. Hear you, sir ;
What is the reason that you use me thus ?
I loved you ever : But it is no matter ;
Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew, and dog will have his day. [*Exit.*

King. I pray you, good Horatio, wait upon him.—
[*Exit* HORATIO.
Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech ;
[*To* LAERTES.
We 'll put the matter to the present push.—
Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.—
This grave shall have a living monument :
An hour of quiet shortly shall we see ;
Till then, in patience our proceeding be. [*Exeunt.*

[1] *Eisel.*] A sort of vinegar. Chaucer, Romaunt of the Rose, 218, speaks of 'bread kneaden with cisel strong and eager.'

[2] *Her golden couplets, &c.*] Her two golden young ones are brought out of the shell. 'One aerie with proportion ne'er discloses the eagle and the wren.' Massinger's Maid of Honour, i. 2. *See* Note 1, p. 80.

SCENE II.—*A Hall in the Castle.*

Enter HAMLET *and* HORATIO.

Ham. So much for this, sir; now let me see the other;—[1]
You do remember all the circumstance?[2]
Hor. Remember it, my lord?
Ham. Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,
That would not let me sleep: methought I lay
Worse than the mutines[3] in the bilboes. Rashly,[4]
And praised be rashness for it,—Let us know,
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
When our dear plots do pall: and that should teach us,
There 's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.—
Hor. That is most certain.
Ham. Up from my cabin,
My sea-gown scarfed[5] about me, in the dark
Groped I to find out them: had my desire;
Fingered their packet; and, in fine, withdrew
To mine own room again: making so bold,

[1] *The other.*] The other matter, of which he had said in the letter to Horatio, 'Of them [Rosencrantz and Guildenstern] I have much to tell thee.'

[2] *All the circumstance.*] The general account I have alrea given you.

[3] *Mutines in the bilboes.*] Mutineers in fetters in a ship's prison. A *mutin* is French for a mutineer. Bilboes, perhaps so named from Bilboa in Spain, were iron bars with fetters, used for the punishment of insubordinate sailors.

[4] *Rashly.*] Venturously. The words 'Rashly, and praised be rashness for it, have their proper continuation in Hamlet's next speech.

[5] *Scarfed.*] Thrown loosely.

My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio,—
O royal knavery!—an exact command,
Larded with many several sorts of reason,
Importing Denmark's health, and England's too,
With, ho! such bugs[1] and goblins in my life,
That, on the supervise,[2] no leisure bated,
No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,
My head should be struck off.

Hor. Is 't possible?

Ham. Here 's the commission; read it at more leisure.
But wilt thou hear me how I did proceed?

Hor. Ay, 'beseech you.

Ham. Being thus benetted round with villainies,—
Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had begun the play,—I sat me down;
Devised a new commission; wrote it fair:—
I once did hold it, as our statists do,
A baseness to write fair, and laboured much
How to forget that learning; but, sir, now
It did me yeoman's service:[3]—Wilt thou know
The effects of what I wrote?

Hor. Ay, good my lord.

Ham. An earnest conjuration from the king,—
As England was his faithful tributary;
As love between them as the palm should flourish;
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear,
And stand a comma[4] 'tween their amities;

[1] *Such bugs, &c.*] Such bugbears and imaginary terrors caused by my being alive.

[2] *On the supervise.*] After the looking over or perusal.

[3] *Yeoman's service.*] Alluding to the *Yeomen of the Guard*, the sovereign's bodyguard.

[4] *A comma.*] This denoted properly *the clause* terminated by the

And many such like *as's* of great charge,—
That on the view and know of these contents,
Without debatement further, more or less,
He should the bearers put to sudden death,
Not shriving-time allowed.

Hor. How was this sealed?

Ham. Why, even in that was heaven ordinant;
I had my father's signet in my purse,
Which was the model of that Danish seal:
Folded the writ up in form of the other;
Subscribed it; gave 't the impression; placed it safely,
The changeling never known. Now, the next day
Was our sea-fight: and what to this was sequent
Thou know'st already.

Hor. So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to 't.

Ham. Why, man, they did make love to this employment;
They are not near my conscience; their defeat
Does by their own insinuation grow:
'T is dangerous when the baser nature comes
Between the pass and fell incensed points
Of mighty opposites.

Hor. Why, what a king is this!

Ham. Does it not, think'st thee,[1] stand me now upon—
He that hath killed my king, and whored my mother,

point that we call a comma; but whether the word may be thus shown to make proper sense here seems doubtful. Staunton's suggestion that Shakspeare may have written *co-mate* is a very good one.

[1] *Think'st thee*, &c.] *Thee* for *thou*, as before noticed (p. 5). The phrase 'it does stand me upon' = it stands upon me, or is incumbent on me. 'It stands your grace upon to do him right.' [illegible]. Richard II. ii. 3. 'It stands me much upon to stop all hopes,' [illegible]. K. Richard III. iv. 2. 'All agreed that it stood them upon to [illegible]ve a chief magis'rate.' North's Plutarch, Fabius.

Popped in between the election and my hopes,
Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
And with such cozenage,—is 't not perfect conscience,
To quit him with this arm? and is 't not to be damned,
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil?

Hor. It must be shortly known to him from England,
What is the issue of the business there.

Ham. It will be short: the interim is mine;
And a man's life 's no more than to say, *one.*
But I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself;
For by the image[1] of my cause I see
The portraiture of his: I 'll court his favours;
But, sure, the bravery of his grief did put me
Into a towering passion.

Hor. Peace! who comes here?

Enter OSRIC.

Osr. Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

Ham. I humbly thank you, sir.—Dost know this water-fly?

Hor. No, my good lord.

Ham. Thy state is the more gracious; for 't is a vice to know him: He hath much land, and fertile; let a beast be lord of beasts, and his crib shall stand at the king's mess: 'T is a chough; but, as I say, spacious in the possession of dirt.

Osr. Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart a thing to you from his majesty.

Ham. I will receive it with all diligence of spirit: Put your bonnet to his right use: 't is for the head.

Osr. I thank your lordship, 't is very hot.

[1] *By the image, &c.*] My cause is a father's death, so is his.

Ham. No, believe me, 't is very cold; the wind is northerly.

Osr. It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

Ham. Methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.

Osr. Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry,—as 't were,—I cannot tell how.—But, my lord, his majesty bade me signify to you, that he has laid a great wager on your head: Sir, this is the matter.

Ham. I beseech you, remember[1]—

[HAMLET *moves him to put on his hat.*

Osr. Nay, in good faith; for mine ease, in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to court, Laertes: believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences,[2] of very soft society, and great showing: Indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry, for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see.

Ham. Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you;—though, I know, to divide him inventorially would dizzy the arithmetic of memory; and yet but yaw[3] neither, in respect of his quick sail. But, in the verity of extolment, I take him to be a soul of great article; and his infusion of such dearth and rareness, as, to make true diction of him,

[1] *I beseech you, remember.*] *Scil.* your courtesy; for that was the phrase used in beseeching one to keep his head covered. 'I do beseech thee, remember thy courtesy:—apparel thy head.' Love's Labour's Lost, v. 1. 'Pray you remember your courtesy:—nay, pray you be covered.' Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humour, i. 1.

[2] *Differences.*] Distinctions. The euphuism of this fop is mocked by Hamlet in the next speech.

[3] *And yet but yaw, &c.*] To *yaw* is to roll from side to side, like a ship. I think Shakspeare must have written *yaws*, the construction being 'his definement suffers no perdition in you, and yet but yaws neither, &c., that is, does not come up to him.

his semblable[1] is his mirror; and who else would trace him, his umbrage, nothing more.

Osr. Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

Ham. The concernancy, sir? why do we wrap the gentleman in our more rawer breath?

Osr. Sir?

Hor. Is 't not possible to understand in another tongue? You will do 't, sir, really.

Ham. What imports the nomination[2] of this gentleman?

Osr. Of Laertes?

Hor. His purse is empty already; all his golden words are spent.

Ham. Of him, sir.

Osr. I know you are not ignorant—

Ham. I would, you did, sir; yet, in faith, if you did, it would not much approve me.—Well, sir?

Osr. You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is—

Ham. I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence; but to know a man well were to know himself.

Osr. I mean, sir, for his weapon; but in the imputation laid on him by them, in his meed he 's unfellowed.

Ham. What 's his weapon?

Osr. Rapier and dagger.[3]

Ham. That 's two of his weapons: but, well?

Osr. The king, sir, hath waged with him six Barbary

[1] *His semblable, &c.*] His likeness is nowhere but in his looking-glass, and whoever else would attempt to imitate him is only a shadow of him.

[2] *The nomination.*] Your naming or making mention.

[3] *Rapier and dagger.*] These became weapons of gentility, supplanting the sword and buckler, which was then consigned to vulgarity. Hence in 1 K. Henry IV., i. 3, Hotspur says, sneeringly, 'that same sword-and-buckler prince.'

horses: against the which he has imponed, as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hanger, so: Three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

Ham. What call you the carriages?

Hor. I knew you must be edified[1] by the margent ere you had done.

Osr. The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

Ham. The phrase would be more german[2] to the matter, if we could carry cannon by our sides: I would it might be hangers till then. But on: Six Barbary horses against six French swords, their assigns, and three liberal-conceited carriages: that's the French bet against the Danish: Why is this *imponed*, as you call it?

Osr. The king, sir, hath laid, that in a dozen passes between you and him, he shall not exceed you three hits; he hath laid on twelve for nine;[3] and it would come to immediate trial, if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

Ham. How if I answer No?

Osr. I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

Ham. Sir, I will walk here in the hall, if it please his majesty; it is the breathing time of day with me: let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the king hold his purpose, I will win for him, if I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame, and the odd hits.

Osr. Shall I re-deliver you e'en so?

[1] *Must be edified, &c.*] Would require marginal explanation.

[2] *German.*] Akin.

[3] *He hath laid on twelve for nine.*] He has wagered for nine out of twelve.

Ham. To this effect, sir; after what flourish your nature will.

Osr. I commend my duty to your lordship. [*Exit.*

Ham. Yours, yours. He does well to commend it himself: there are no tongues else for 's turn.

Hor. This lapwing runs away[1] with the shell on his head.

Ham. He did comply with[2] his dug, before he sucked it. Thus has he (and many more of the same bevy, that, I know, the drossy age dotes on) only got the tune of the time, and outward habit of encounter; a kind of yesty collection, which carries them through and through the most fanned and winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trials, the bubbles are out.

Enter a Lord.

Lord. My lord, his majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him, that you attend[3] him in the hall: He sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time.

Ham. I am constant to my purposes, they follow the king's pleasure: if his fitness speaks, mine is ready: now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now.

Lord. The king, and queen, and all are coming down.

Ham. In happy time.

Lord. The queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes, before you fall to play.

Ham. She well instructs me. [*Exit* Lord.

Hor. You will lose this wager, my lord.

[1] *Runs away, &c.*] Comes out very forwardly. So in Webster's White Devil, ii., 'Forward lapwing, he flies with the shell on 's head:' alluding to the lapwing leaving the nest as soon as hatched.

[2] *Comply with.*] Humour, adapt himself to. *See* Note 3, p. 62.

[3] *Attend.*] Await.

Ham. I do not think so; since he went into France, I have been in continual practice; I shall win at the odds. But thou wouldst not think, how ill all 's here about my heart: but it is no matter.

Hor. Nay, good my lord,—

Ham. It is but foolery; but it is such a kind of gain-giving,[1] as would perhaps trouble a woman.

Hor. If your mind dislike anything, obey it; I will forestall their repair hither, and say you are not fit.

Ham. Not a whit, we defy augury; there 's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 't is not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all: Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is 't to leave betimes?

Enter KING, QUEEN, LAERTES, Lords, OSRIC, *and* Attendants *with foils*, &c.

King. Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me. [*The* KING *puts the hand of* LAERTES *into that of* HAMLET.

Ham. Give me your pardon, sir; I have done you wrong;
But pardon 't, as you are a gentleman.
This presence knows, and you must needs have heard,
How I am punished with a sore distraction.
What I have done,
That might your nature, honour, and exception,
Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.
Was 't Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet:
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
And, when he 's not himself, does wrong Laertes,

[1] *Gain-giving.*] Misgiving. *Gain* is for *again*, that is, against, in the word *gainsay*.

Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.
Who does it then? His madness. If 't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wronged;
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.
Sir, in this audience
Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts,
That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house
And hurt my brother.

Laer. I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motive, in this case, should stir me most
To my revenge: but in my terms of honour
I stand aloof, and will no reconcilement,
Till by some elder masters, of known honour,
I have a voice and precedent of peace,
To keep my name ungored: But till that time,
I do receive your offered love like love,
And will not wrong it.

Ham. I embrace it freely;
And will this brother's wager frankly play.
Give us the foils; come on.

Laer. Come, one for me.

Ham. I 'll be your foil, Laertes; in mine ignorance
Your skill shall, like a star i' the darkest night,
Stick fiery off indeed.

Laer. You mock me, sir.

Ham. No, by this hand.

King. Give them the foils, young Osric.—Cousin Hamlet,
You know the wager?

Ham. Very well, my lord;
Your grace hath laid the odds o' the weaker side.

King. I do not fear it; I have seen you both.
But since he 's bettered, we have therefore odds.

Laer. This is too heavy, let me see another.

Ham. This likes me well: These foils have all a length?
[*They prepare to play.*

Osr. Ay, my good lord.

King. Set me the stoups of wine upon that table:
If Hamlet give the first or second hit,
Or quit in answer of the third exchange,
Let all the battlements their ordnance fire;
The king shall drink to Hamlet's better breath;
And in the cup an union[1] shall he throw,
Richer than that which four successive kings
In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups,
And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
The trumpet to the cannonier without,
The cannons to the heavens, the heaven to earth,
Now the king drinks to Hamlet.—Come, begin;—
And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

Ham. Come on, sir.

Laer. Come on, sir. [*They play.*

Ham. One.

Laer. No.

Ham. Judgment.

Osr. A hit, a very palpable hit.

Laer. Well,—again.

King. Stay, give me drink: Hamlet, this pearl is thine;
Here 's to thy health. Give him the cup.
[*Trumpets sound; and cannons shot off within.*

Ham. I 'll play this bout first, set it by awhile.
Come.—Another hit; What say you? [*They play.*

Laer. A touch, a touch, I do confess.

King. Our son shall win.

Queen. He 's fat, and scant of breath.—

[1] *An union.*] A pearl; Lat. *unio.* The practice of showing high appreciation of a health proposed, by dropping some gem in the cup, is well known.

Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows:
The queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.

Ham. Good, madam.

King. Gertrude, do not drink.

Queen. I will, my lord; I pray you pardon me.

King. It is the poisoned cup: it is too late! [*Aside.*

Ham. I dare not drink yet, madam; by and by.

Queen. Come, let me wipe thy face.

Laer. My lord, I 'll hit him now.

King. I do not think it.

Laer. And yet it is almost against my conscience. [*Aside.*

Ham. Come, for the third, Laertes: You but dally;
I pray you, pass with your best violence;
I am afeard you make a wanton of me.

Laer. Say you so? come on. [*They play.*

Osr. Nothing neither way.

Laer. Have at you now.

[LAERTES *wounds* HAMLET; *then, in scuffling, they change rapiers, and* HAMLET *wounds Laertes.*

King. Part them! they are incensed.

Ham. Nay, come again. [*The* QUEEN *falls.*

Osr. Look to the queen there, ho!

Hor. They bleed on both sides!—How is it, my lord?

Osr. How is 't, Laertes?

Laer. Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric:
I am justly killed with mine own treachery.

Ham. How does the queen?

King. She swoons to see them bleed.

Queen. No, no, the drink, the drink!—O my dear Hamlet!—
The drink, the drink!—I am poisoned! [*Dies.*

Ham. No, believe me, 't is very cold; the wind is northerly.

Osr. It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

Ham. Methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.

Osr. Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry,—as 't were,—I cannot tell how.—But, my lord, his majesty bade me signify to you, that he has laid a great wager on your head: Sir, this is the matter.

Ham. I beseech you, remember[1]—

[HAMLET *moves him to put on his hat.*

Osr. Nay, in good faith; for mine ease, in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to court, Laertes: believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences,[2] of very soft society, and great showing: Indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry, for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see.

Ham. Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you;—though, I know, to divide him inventorially would dizzy the arithmetic of memory; and yet but yaw[3] neither, in respect of his quick sail. But, in the verity of extolment, I take him to be a soul of great article; and his infusion of such dearth and rareness, as, to make true diction of him,

[1] *I beseech you, remember.*] *Scil.* your courtesy; for that was the phrase used in beseeching one to keep his head covered. 'I do beseech thee, remember thy courtesy:—apparel thy head.' Love's Labour's Lost, v. 1. 'Pray you remember your courtesy:—nay, pray you be covered.' Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humour, i. 1.

[2] *Differences.*] Distinctions. The euphuism of this fop is mocked by Hamlet in the next speech.

[3] *And yet but yaw, &c.*] To *yaw* is to roll from side to side, like a ship. I think Shakspeare must have written *yaws*, the construction being 'his definement suffers no perdition in you, and yet but yaws neither, &c., that is, does not come up to him.

his semblable[1] is his mirror; and who else would trace him, his umbrage, nothing more.

Osr. Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

Ham. The concernancy, sir? why do we wrap the gentleman in our more rawer breath?

Osr. Sir?

Hor. Is 't not possible to understand in another tongue? You will do 't, sir, really.

Ham. What imports the nomination[2] of this gentleman?

Osr. Of Laertes?

Hor. His purse is empty already; all his golden words are spent.

Ham. Of him, sir.

Osr. I know you are not ignorant—

Ham. I would, you did, sir; yet, in faith, if you did, it would not much approve me.—Well, sir?

Osr. You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is—

Ham. I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence; but to know a man well were to know himself.

Osr. I mean, sir, for his weapon; but in the imputation laid on him by them, in his meed he 's unfellowed.

Ham. What 's his weapon?

Osr. Rapier and dagger.[3]

Ham. That 's two of his weapons: but, well?

Osr. The king, sir, hath waged with him six Barbary

[1] *His semblable, &c.*] His likeness is nowhere but in his looking-glass, and whoever else would attempt to imitate him is only a shadow of him.

[2] *The nomination.*] Your naming or making mention.

[3] *Rapier and dagger.*] These became weapons of gentility, supplanting the sword and buckler, which was then consigned to vulgarity. Hence in 1 K. Henry IV., i. 3, Hotspur says, sneeringly, 'that same sword-and-buckler prince.'

horses: against the which he has imponed, as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hanger, so: Three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

Ham. What call you the carriages?

Hor. I knew you must be edified[1] by the margent ere you had done.

Osr. The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

Ham. The phrase would be more german[2] to the matter, if we could carry cannon by our sides: I would it might be hangers till then. But on: Six Barbary horses against six French swords, their assigns, and three liberal-conceited carriages: that's the French bet against the Danish: Why is this *imponed*, as you call it?

Osr. The king, sir, hath laid, that in a dozen passes between you and him, he shall not exceed you three hits; he hath laid on twelve for nine;[3] and it would come to immediate trial, if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

Ham. How if I answer No?

Osr. I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

Ham. Sir, I will walk here in the hall, if it please his majesty; it is the breathing time of day with me: let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the king hold his purpose, I will win for him, if I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame, and the odd hits.

Osr. Shall I re-deliver you e'en so?

[1] *Must be edified, &c.*] Would require marginal explanation.

[2] *German.*] Akin.

[3] *He hath laid on twelve for nine.*] He has wagered for nine out of twelve.

Ham. To this effect, sir; after what flourish your nature will.

Osr. I commend my duty to your lordship. [*Exit.*

Ham. Yours, yours. He does well to commend it himself: there are no tongues else for 's turn.

Hor. This lapwing runs away[1] with the shell on his head.

Ham. He did comply with[2] his dug, before he sucked it. Thus has he (and many more of the same bevy, that, I know, the drossy age dotes on) only got the tune of the time, and outward habit of encounter; a kind of yesty collection, which carries them through and through the most fanned and winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trials, the bubbles are out.

Enter a Lord.

Lord. My lord, his majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him, that you attend[3] him in the hall: He sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time.

Ham. I am constant to my purposes, they follow the king's pleasure: if his fitness speaks, mine is ready: now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now.

Lord. The king, and queen, and all are coming down.

Ham. In happy time.

Lord. The queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes, before you fall to play.

Ham. She well instructs me. [*Exit* Lord.

Hor. You will lose this wager, my lord.

[1] *Runs away, &c.*] Comes out very forwardly. So in Webster's White Devil, ii., 'Forward lapwing, he flies with the shell on 's head:' alluding to the lapwing leaving the nest as soon as hatched.

[2] *Comply with.*] Humour, adapt himself to. *See* Note 3, p. 62.

[3] *Attend.*] Await.

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